

THE
INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH
IN
CHRISTIAN PIETY.

TAKEN OUT OF THE
SACRED SCRIPTURES AND HOLY FATHERS.

FROM THE FRENCH

OF

CHARLES GOBINET, D.D.

VOL. I.

THE FIFTH EDITION,

REVISED AND CORRECTED

BY THE REV. B. MAC MAHON.

To give subtilty to little ones, to the young men knowledge and understanding. A wise man shall hear, and shall be wiser. Prov. i. 4, 5.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY P. WOGAN, No. 23, OLD-BRIDGE.

M.DCC.XCIII.



A DEDICATORY
P R A Y E R
T O T H E
S O N O F G O D.

TO thee, O Saviour of souls, I consecrate this work. In offering it to thee, I restore a thing which by all manner of titles appertains to thee. That fervent zeal which thou wast pleased so frequently to manifest for the salvation of Youth, when thou wast upon earth, has given rise to this design, and the hope I had of thy succour, gave me confidence to undertake it. Let not my misery prevent the effects of thy bounty, nor hinder thy pious instructions from producing in souls that fruit they ought to bring forth. Divine JESUS! animate with thy holy spirit the words of this book. Cause them, for whom it is written, to acknowledge, in reading it, their strict obligations of serving thee, and thy earnest desire of their salvation. Speak thou to their hearts at the same time that these words inform their eyes, and inspire them by the influence of thy grace, with a relish for those salutary documents, which thou hast communicated to us. It behoves thee now, rather than at any other time, to make the effects of thy mercy appear upon young people. It is time, O Lord, they have dissipated thy law. The greater part of them abandon thee when they should begin to serve thee. They forget that solemn promise they made thee at baptism, and the inestimable favours they have received from thy infinite goodness. O divine Saviour! let not those souls be lost, which thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood, and for the salvation of which thou hast testified so great love. Reserve them for thy service! hinder them from bending their knees before Baal, and from being corrupted by the infection of this perverse age. Make that zeal which thou hast for the salvation of youth, revive in thy priests, and grant me the grace, which I most humbly implore, so faithfully to employ my pains and labour in assisting young people, that I may promote thy glory.*

VOL. I.

A

THE

P R E F A C E.

THE intent of a Preface is to inform the reader, either of the design of the author, or of the occasion which gave rise to the work, or of the order and method that is observed therein, or of the profit that may be reaped from it. As for my design, it is no other than what the title of the book imports, to instruct youth in piety. This is all I aim and aspire at. The occasion of undertaking it was, my being called to the direction of youth, when I endeavoured to qualify myself for so important an employment, and to answer the pious intentions of those who entrusted me with such a charge. Now in labouring to instruct myself, I found that what I had prepared for my own use might serve for the instruction of youth, if it were reduced into method. I have therefore disposed of it into the method you see, wherein I treat of five things, which seemed to me the most necessary for giving young people a complete instruction in piety. 1. The motives which oblige them thereto. 2. The means they ought to employ to obtain it. 3. The obstacles and difficulties which occur therein. 4. The virtues which are peculiar to their age. 5. The importance of making a good choice of a state of life, and the means to perform it in a due manner. Which last is a subject little known by young people, and still less practised.

As to the profitableness of this book, dear Reader, it is not my part but yours to judge of it. The end for which it is composed, which is the instruction of youth, will make you esteem it useful. The matter of it, which is chiefly taken out of the sacred scripture and holy fathers, will cause you to form the same judgment. If the method I have observed appear easy, it will give a favourable decision.

I write for young people : for them have I composed this work, and particularly for those whom God has pleased to commit to my charge. If others more advanced in age take the pains to read it, I desire they will peruse it with the spirit of charity, excusing, what they shall find defective in it, and receiving kindly what they shall find good. I exhort you, dear Reader, to improve yourself by this small labour which I have undertaken for your salvation. I call you in this instruction by the name of Theotime, which word signifies a soul that honours God ; because I consider you in that state, or at least willing to attain it. Read then with this spirit and desire. Read to be instructed there concerning your salvation, and to learn therein betimes what you are to do during the whole course of your life ; that is, to serve him to whom you are indebted for every thing you possess. And lastly, that you may receive some solid advantage from this book, I beg two things.

First,

P R E F A C E.

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First, that you read it with three conditions ; with a desire to learn, with attention, and with order.

*Secondly, that you will consider it is not I who speak to you, but God, by the divine instructions he has given us in the sacred scripture, and in the writings of the holy fathers. Read it therefore with all the respect, which is due to that adorable master ; and in these sacred fountains search for true wisdom, without which all other things are but folly. Happy you, if you search for it as you ought, and if you can one day say with one of the wisest of men *, that having searched for wisdom during your youth, you have found it, and made daily progress in it. You will, as he did, give all the glory to God, who is the author thereof : To him that giveth me wisdom will I give glory † ; you will also reap an advantage, which will continue with you for all eternity.*

Advice concerning the present Edition.

In the former editions of this work, the Scripture texts were often wrong quoted, and their translation inaccurate : in this, such mistakes have been rectified, and the version of the DOWAY BIBLE substituted. There has been added a small Essay upon Prayer, extracted from a treatise upon the same subject, which was published as a supplement to this INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH by the Author. Some few other alterations have been made, by the Approbation of the ORDINARY.

* Eccli. li. † Eccles. li. 23.

P R A Y E R S

To be said before and after reading any Book of Piety.

A Prayer before Reading.

O GOD, who hast taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that we may, by the gift of the same Spirit, be always truly wise, and ever feel that joy, which is the effect of his holy consolation: through *Jesus Christ* our Lord. *Amen.*

A Prayer after Reading.

GRANT us, we beseech thee, O Lord, the help of thy grace, that what by thy instruction we know is to be done, by thy assistance we may perfectly accomplish: through *Jesus Christ* our Lord. *Amen.*

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OF THE
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T H E
INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH
IN
CHRISTIAN PIETY.

P A R T I.

*The reasons and motives which oblige men to apply themselves to virtue
in their youth.*

C H A P. I.

The end for which man is created.

OF all things necessary for man to know, the end for which he came into this world deserves his first attention. Because, being a rational creature, he ought to act for a final end, in the enjoyment whereof he may find his eternal happiness. *The end for which man is created ought to be first known.*

Now he cannot act for this end without a knowledge of it, which exciting a desire, makes him search for, and employ the means of obtaining it. A man who knows not his last end is like a beast, because he regards only things present, things material and sensible, after the manner of brutes: and in this he is much more miserable than they, since they find in these exterior objects the felicity they are capable of; but he, instead of finding repose, meets with nothing but disgust, and the source of endless misfortunes.

From the ignorance of their last end originate all the disorders discernible in the lives of men; because forgetting that noble and divine end for which their Creator designed them, they are wholly taken up with the pleasures of this mortal life; living upon earth, as if made for the earth.

It would move compassion, to see a child born of royal blood, and destined by his birth one day to wear a crown, yet bred up amongst peasants, and ignorant of his extraction, apply himself

wholly to till the earth, bounding all his pretensions within the scanty limits of earning a miserable livelihood with the sweat of his brow, without having the least thought of the high fortune to which he was born : but it is much more to be deplored, to see men who are the children of heaven, designed by the Almighty to reign there eternally, live in an entire forgetfulness of that end for which they are created, and, setting all their affections upon earthly things, wretchedly deprive themselves of that immense happiness which the bounty of their Creator prepared for them in heaven.

For this reason, dear *Theotime*, resolving to exhort you to embrace virtue in your youth, I propose to you first, what you are, and for what end you were created ; that knowing this, your end, you may ardently aspire to it, and by early endeavours render yourself worthy of it.

Reflection upon three things.

Recollect yourself then, and reflect upon three things : what you are, who made you, and for what end.

What man is. I. You are a man, that is, a creature endowed with understanding and reason, composed of a body, the structure whereof is admirable, and of a reasonable soul, made to the image of God. You are the most perfect of all visible creatures.

Who made man. II. You were not made by yourself, for that is impossible ; you received from another the being you now enjoy. And from whom have you received it, but from him who created heaven and earth, and who is the author of all things ? It is he who formed your body in your mother's womb, and brought your soul out of nothing by his power. You are the work of a God ; and besides the father you have upon earth, you have another in heaven, to whom you owe all that you possess.

Why God made man.

III. But why did God make you ? Be attentive, *Theotime* ; for what end, think you, did God place you in this world ? Was it to enjoy the sensual pleasures and satisfactions of this life ? To heap up riches ? To acquire glory and reputation amongst men ? Nothing less. You have a soul too noble to be destined for such wretched and perishable things : pleasures are changed into pain, riches perish, and glory vanishes. Is it to continue a long time upon earth, to find there your happiness, and to look for nothing after this life ? If so, there is no difference between you and irrational beings. Does not this so noble a soul which God bestowed on you, endowed with understanding, will, and memory, capable of knowing all things, clearly manifest that you were created for a higher and more honourable end ? Does not this figure of the body you bear, the stature erect, the head on high, and eyes raised towards heaven, teach you that you are not made for the earth ?

Beasts are made for the earth, there they find their happiness, and for

that reason they look down upon the earth : but you, dear *Theotime*, you are created for heaven ; that is the place of your abode, as it is that of your origin ; your soul came from heaven, and it ought to return thither.

But what will you find in heaven, that can render you happy ? Will it be the sight of the firmament with all those beauteous stars ? Of the sun, *that admirable instrument, that work of the Most High* *. And of all that is wonderful and great in heaven ? No. All these things are not able to effect your felicity ; God has esteemed them too mean for you ; he made them for your service, not to be the object and cause of your happiness. In a word, consider all that is in the universe, those vast and wonderful things which God has created ; all which are not able to complete your happiness, God has not made you for any of these things.

For what then ? For nothing less than the possession and enjoyment of himself in heaven. He has not judged the fairest of his creatures worthy of you ; he has given himself to be the object of your happiness. For this reason he gave you a soul, formed to his image, capable of possessing him, and which, by reason of this capacity, is never content nor satisfied with the possessions and delights of this life, as every one finds by experience.

You were not then made for creatures, dear *Theotime*, but for the Creator. Your last end is not the enjoyment of creatures, but of God himself. You were created to be happy by the possession of a God in heaven, and to reign with him in a felicity incomprehensible to human understanding : *The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him* †. And this for how long ? For all eternity, that is, for a time which shall never end, but continue as long as God himself. This is that most noble end for which you are designed ; this is the inheritance which your celestial Father has prepared for you ; this is that end for which he has created you. All this visible world was but destined for your present use, to help you in promoting the glory of God.

This being so, recollect your thoughts, and fix them upon these two points.

1. What have you done hitherto in order to that blessed end for which God has designed you ? Have you aspired thither with all your heart ? Have you endeavoured to make yourself worthy of it ? Alas ! perhaps you have not yet seriously thought of it ; perhaps you are far removed from it by a life full of sin, imitating the generality of men, who turn their backs upon that happy country to which their heavenly Father calls them. O blindness of men, how great art thou ! dear *Theotime*, how do I deplore your misfortune, if you be of that number !

B 2

2. Where-

* Eccles. xliii. 2. † 1 Cor. ii. 9.

2. Wherefore consider in the second place what you have to do from henceforth, in order to obtain that happy end for which you are created. How long will you think so little of your dear country? How long will you forget heaven, O child of heaven, whose origin is heavenly, and who are designed for heaven alone! "O man" (says S. Peter Chrysologus*) "what have you to do with the earth, who pretend to be of heavenly extraction, when you say, our Father who art in heaven? Manifest therefore a celestial life in an earthly habitation; if you live otherwise, you stain your noble stock, and disgrace your heavenly origin." Conclude then, dear *Theotime*, and make here a holy resolution to aspire to that happy end for which you were created, and to labour carefully to make yourself worthy, by a life not unbecoming a child of God, designed to possess heaven and God himself. This is to be done, 1st, by flying sin, the only obstacle which can withhold you from it, and ruin you for ever; and, 2dly, by embracing virtue, the only path which leads to it.

C H A P. II.

Of our vocation to the grace of baptism and of its obligations.

The second thing necessary to be known.

The means of attaining to our last end.

BEING now informed of the end of your creation, you must learn in the next place the means God has appointed for attaining to this end, the first of which is the grace of making you a Christian, and rescuing you by baptism from the universal destruction occasioned by sin.

Endeavour to comprehend the greatness of this inestimable benefit. 'Tis of great importance to know it in your youth, if you wish to avoid the ordinary misfortune of Christians, the greatest part of whom are absolutely ignorant what it is to be a Christian, and what that name and state oblige them to. Hence they become so undeserving; leading a life altogether contrary to the sanctity of their state, and are unfortunately lost in that vocation wherein alone they can be saved.

Therefore, I beseech you to read attentively this chapter divided into two articles.

A R T I C L E I.

Of the excellence of the state of a Christian, and of the favour God bestows on him whom he calls to this state.

What it is to be a Christian.

YOU are a Christian, *Theotime*, by the grace of God: but do you understand what this is, and what you are by this quality? Take notice of it,

it, and learn to know the great favour God bestowed on you in the day of your baptism.

By the baptism which you have received, you are washed from original sin by the merits of the blood of *Jesus Christ**; delivered from the universal curse of mankind incurred by sin, and freed from the power of the Devil†. You have been made the child of God, the disciple of *Jesus Christ* your Saviour‡. You have acquired God for your father, *Jesus Christ* for your master§, your instructor, your example, and for the rule of your life; the holy church for your mother guardian; the angels for your protectors; the saints for your intercessors. You have been made the temple of God, who dwells in you by grace||. The heir to his eternal kingdom¶, from the right and hope whereof you were fallen for ever; and you are brought back into the secure way that leads to it, being made a member of *Jesus Christ* and his church, out of which there is no salvation, and wherein you are now illuminated with the light of the faith of *Jesus Christ*, instructed by his doctrine, nourished with his precious body and blood, assisted by his grace, and furnished with all the necessary means for your salvation. O God, how noble and how honorable is the state of a Christian! What acknowledgments, *Theotime*, ought you to render to the almighty God, who has heaped upon you such immense favours!

To comprehend better the greatness thereof, consider yet that which follows.

1. God was no ways bound to do thus much for you, but it is a pure effect of his mercy, and of the great love he has for you. *Not by the works of justice, which we have done, (says the apostle S. Paul) but according to his mercy he saved us, by the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost, whom he hath poured forth upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour**.*

Three important considerations.

2. Without this favour which God has shewn you, you could never have been saved: for there is no salvation without faith. Where would you have been, if God had not shewn you this mercy?

3. He has not done this favour to thousands of men who live in pagan countries, in the darkness of ignorance and sin; nor to so many heretics, who although they be baptized as you, yet live in error separated from the true faith of the catholic church, which is *the pillar and ground of the truth*††. Why were not you of that number? Why has God made you to be born in a Christian country rather than others, and in the bosom of the catholic church, where you are instructed in the divine mysteries, and things necessary for your salvation? How have you merited this favour? What happiness is it for you, dear *Theotime*, to have experienced

* Apocalyse i. 5. † Eph. ii. 3, 4, 5. ‡ Gal. iii. 26, 27. § Matt. xxiii. 9, 10. || 1 Cor. iii. 16. ¶ Jam. ii. 5. ** Tit. iii. 5, 6. †† 1 Tim. iii. 15.

experienced so great bounty of our God! *We are happy, O Israel; because the things that are pleasing to God, are made known to us**. O how fortunate are we by the grace of God, which has called us to the knowledge of his divine mysteries and adorable will! He has not shewn this goodness to all the world†. And why has he done it to us rather than to others? O dear *Theotime*, how is it possible that we should not fix our affections upon a God who has loved us so much.

Learn here from a Christian king the esteem you ought to have for your vocation. *St. Lewis*, king of *France*, had such a value for the favour of God shewed him in making him a Christian, that he not only preferred it before his kingdom, as in effect it is infinitely greater, but having been baptized in the castle of *Poissy*, he would bear that name, and be called *Lewis of Poissy*, and thus signed his letters and dispatches, esteeming this title more glorious than that of king of *France*. And *S. Augustine*, speaking of the emperor *Theodosius*, says, "That he accounted himself more happy in being "a member of the church, than emperor of the world‡." These great men, *Theotime*, knew how to value the grace of Christianity according to its real worth.

A R T I C L E II.

Of the great obligations of a Christian.

Three great Christian obligations.

IF our vocation to Christianity be so high a favour, what are the obligations of it? Doubtless very great, and far more so than what the generality of Christians imagine. Be attentive, *Theotime*, and learn what your profession obliges you to.

First obligation of Christians.

It obliges you to believe firmly all that God has revealed to us by his son *Jesus Christ*, comprised under four heads; viz. The mysteries of faith, the maxims he preached, the recompense of the good, and the punishment of the wicked. You were admitted to baptism only upon this condition, when the priest put this question to you, *Dost thou believe in the Father, in the Son our saviour and redeemer, and in the Holy Ghost?* You answered by the mouth of your god-father, *Credo, I believe*. But remember that this faith ought to be

Three conditions of faith.

firm, generous, and efficacious. *Firm*, not doubting of any thing that ought to be believed. *Generous*, not being ashamed to make profession of it before men. *Efficacious*, living according to the truths you believe, and not by your actions giving the lye to your faith; after the example of many Christians, who, as the apostle says, *Profess that they know God, but in their works they deny him§*.

The

* Baruch iv. 4. † Ps. cxlvii. 20. ‡ Aug. lib. 5. de Civ. Dei, c. 20. § Tit. i. 16.

The profession of Christianity obliges you to renounce the Devil, and all his works. This is also a condition upon which you were admitted to baptism. The priest asking, *Dost thou renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his pomps?* You answered, *Abrenuntio, I renounce.* O *Theotime*, have you ever reflected upon this renunciation, and do you comprehend it? It is a solemn profession which you have made, not to serve the Devil, nor follow his pomps; that is, the false appearances of earthly goods and pleasures, by the love of which he endeavours to seduce and destroy men; and to fly from all his works, that is, sin, of which he is the first author. It is a promise you made to God in the hands of the church, in the sight of the angels, and wherein, as *S. Augustin* says, “you have made a renunciation, “not speaking to men, but to God and the Angels, who are witnesses and depositaries of your word, and who carefully keep it “in heaven*.” You are obliged to observe this renunciation which you have made; you have abjured the Devil by your words, you must also abandon him by your life and actions, if you wish not to be looked upon as a traitor and a deserter. Alas! *Theotime*, have you done so? At least, will you do it for the future? Is it possible that you should return to that enemy, whom you have so solemnly renounced?

Second Christian obligation.

The profession of a Christian obliges you to live in innocence, flying sin more than death, and practising the virtues of a Christian. To admonish you of this obligation, the priest, after he had baptized you, clothed you with a white garment, saying, *Receive this white garment, and see, thou carry it without stain before the judgment seat of God.* To make you remember by that exterior whiteness, and by those words, to preserve carefully the beauty and interior purity which your soul had then received by the grace of baptism. O, *Theotime*, meditate well upon these words, and consider what will befall you at the judgment of God, if you defile that innocence by a life of sin. This white robe, with which you have been clothed, will condemn you in that dreadful day; the priest who baptized you will rise up against you, and demand of God vengeance for abusing the grace of your baptism.

Third obligation of a Christian.

I shall recount to you on this occasion the memorable behaviour of a deacon of *Carthage*, called *Murita*, to the judge *Elpidophorus* an *Arian*, who having been received by him to baptism, had renounced afterwards the catholic faith. This holy deacon, being cited before that wicked judge to give an account of his faith, carried with him the white garment with which he had clothed him at his baptism, and exposing it, spoke to him these words, with which he drew tears from all that were present: “Behold, O *Elpidophorus*, minister of “error, the white garment which will accuse you before the divine “majesty

“ majesty at the day of judgment. I have carefully preserved it as
 “ a proof of your apostacy, which will precipitate you into the abyss
 “ of hell : It served you as an ornament when you came from bap-
 “ tism, washed and cleansed from your sins ; but now it shall serve
 “ to make you suffer more sensibly eternal flames*.”

C H A P. III.

That God requires, and particularly accepts the service of young people.

*Third considera-
 tion obliging men to
 serve God in their
 youth.*

AFTER the two preceding considerations, I pass over to others yet more particular, to convince you of the strict obligation you are under of consecrating yourself to God in your youth. The first is, that God earnestly desires to be served by you in that age.

First reason.

Because the time of youth is the beginning of life. Now it is certain, that in all things God claims particularly the first, and the beginnings. For this reason in the old law, he commanded the first-fruits of all things to be offered to him. Of fruits, he required the first gathered to be presented ; of beasts, the first brought forth to be sacrificed ; and of men, the eldest son to be dedicated to his service in the temple, though he permitted them afterwards to be redeemed ; shewing by this institution, that notwithstanding all things being equally his, yet he had a special esteem for the first, as those which above all others were due to him, and which he required as an acknowledgment. Hence the time of youth being the beginning and first part of our life, God demands it particularly, and will have it offered to him, in order to be faithfully employed in his service.

Second reason. Secondly, the time of youth is most pleasing to God, because generally speaking, according to the natural order of things, it is the most innocent

part of life and least corrupted by sin : for then the knowledge of evil is not extensive, neither is there so much ability or opportunity to commit it : the judgment is not perverted by the false maxims of the world, nor the inclinations corrupted by the infection of the wicked, as in a more advanced age. Moreover our baptismal grace, which we had then only lately received, renders that age more agreeable to God, at least in those, who do not forfeit it by a sinful life.

But take notice, *Theotime*, I said, that age is less corrupted, generally speaking, and according to the natural order of things ; yet it is but too true, that oftentimes much wickedness is found therein ; though contrary to the order of nature, which has endowed that
 age

* Vigor Uticensis l. 3. persecut. Vandalorum.

age with a simplicity of mind, and innocence of manners ; hence they are so much the more guilty, who by their malice and depravity corrupt the good dispositions which nature has bestowed upon it, learning wickedness, and running after it, in an age when nature herself teaches nothing but simplicity and innocence.

Thirdly, because youth is the time affording the most opportunities of shewing that you love God *Third reason.* sincerely ; for it is the time of the first temptations, wherein you begin to be solicited to renounce his love and service. You are hurried on by your own passions, which are then the strongest ; invited by those of your age, who often solicit you to wickedness, either by their example, or by their discourse ; and prompted by the enemy of your salvation, who uses all his endeavours to withdraw you from the service of God, and make sure of you betime. So that this age may properly be called the time of combat and trial ; wherein you shew you love God with a constant and real affection, if you courageously resist those first assaults. S. Cyprian says, “ There is “ little merit in being brave in time of peace, in shewing courage “ when one is not attacked, and not in committing wickedness when “ one is not tempted ; but to resist evil and fly from sin in the “ time of temptation, and in an age when strongly solicited to abandon the cause of God, is a real proof of true virtue, and an “ assured mark that one loves God above all things*.”

These reasons, *Theotime*, convince us, that God has a special affection for the homage of youth, which being employed in flying from sin, and serving God, is a sacrifice the most agreeable that can be offered to him. And as a learned author says excellently well : “ Those, who in the time of youth overcome themselves, by courageously resisting all temptations to sin, and who consecrate themselves entirely to the service of God, make one continued sacrifice of their youth to God : which offering cannot but be most agreeable to him, as long as it remains undefiled by sin†.” O *Theotime*, retain well this truth in your mind, and never forget it.

C H A P. IV.

That God particularly loves young people, and delights to bestow many favours upon them.

I Say moreover, *Theotime*, that God not only earnestly desires to be served by you in your youth, but loves you in that age with a particular kindness, and delights to bestow upon

Fourth consideration for serving God in youth.

you

* Lib. de mortalitate. † Hugo a Sanct. Vict.

you more favours at that time than any other, in order to attach you to his service. This truth is no less certain than the former.

God is pleased particularly to assist by his grace three sorts of persons; the *weak*, the *simple*, (that is, those who have least knowledge of evil) and the *humble*. The *Weak*, because there the force of his grace does most appear*. The *Simple*, because having less knowledge of evil, they commonly resist less the grace of God, who, as the sacred scripture says: *Will not cast away the simple, nor reach out his hand to the evil doer* †. The *Humble*, because as the chief obstacle to the grace of God is *Pride*, so the best disposition to obtain it, is *Humility*, according to that saying of scripture, *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble* ‡.

Now these three dispositions generally occur in youth; there is found in youth the most weakness, not only of body but mind, the judgment not being as yet well formed by knowledge and experience, nor the will sufficiently confirmed against impressions contrary to its good. There is in youth more simplicity, as having less knowledge of evil, and less discernment than in a more advanced age. There is also in youth more humility, which is, as it were, natural to that age, formed for subjection and obedience; and if pride be found, as it happens but too often, in young minds, it is owing to an excessive depravity, which subverts the order of things, and overturns nature itself. Hence it evidently follows, that God, who delights in shewing his bounty to those who have most need of it, and do not render themselves undeserving, is pleased to communicate many favours to young people, as well by often inspiring them with good thoughts, and desires, as by every other assistance of his grace; provided they throw no obstacle in the way by their wicked life, nor render themselves unworthy of his favour, by corrupting the innocence of their age through the malice of their mind, or by the multitude of their sins.

Experience confirms this truth. How many are there, who coming to man's estate, find in themselves a great change, being no longer visited with the many graces they had received in their youth? Then holy inspirations were frequent, good desires and pious resolutions were familiar to them; they were averse to evil, goodness was agreeable to them, virtue was sweet, and its precepts easy. But now they find that all these things are changed; inspirations more rare, sin strikes them with less horror; devotion becomes cold, and sometimes totally extinct, by a sad alteration, which makes them justly bewail the time past, and so many graces which they have lost in those words of *Job*: *Who will grant me, that I might be according to the months past, according to the days in which God kept me, by the assistance of his graces*.

S. Augustin dreadfully experienced this change in his own person, as he himself acknowledges in his confessions; for he says: "That falling sick when he was yet a youth, he demanded baptism with
" great

* 2 Cor. xii. 9. † Job. viii. 20. ‡ Ja. iv. 6. § Job xxix.

“ great earnestness and devotion, which was deferred for some particular reasons*.” “ Yet in another great sickness when about thirty years of age, he never thought of asking for it†.” O *Theotime*, I beseech God that this change and regret never befall you, which is the case of too many, and shews clearly the love God bears to young persons, which he only withdraws from them, when they, by abusing his favours, make themselves unworthy of them.

But if you will yet have a convincing and demonstrative proof of the particular love God bears young people, consider what the Son of God did upon this occasion, whilst he was in the world. Besides that he would become himself a child, and pass through all the degrees of age, of infancy, of childhood, of youth, he being able to dispense with himself, and become a perfect man at his first entrance into the world, how often did he, during his life, testify his love and tenderness for that age? The gospel relates in many places‡, how he frequently called to himself little children, and commanded that they be permitted to approach to him; he reproved such as hindered them from approaching to him, saying, it was to them that the kingdom of heaven did appertain: *Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me; for the kingdom of heaven is for such§.* He embraced them with wonderful tenderness, and sent them not back till he had laid his hands upon them, and given them his holy benediction||.

The most remarkable cures he wrought were in favour of young people; such was the son of the ruler who was ready to expire, in *John¶*. Another who was tormented by the Devil**. The servant of the Centurion, and the daughter of the *Cananean*.

Of the three dead whom he raised to life, two were very young, viz. the daughter of *Jarius*, and the son of the widow of *Naim*: and the third, who was *Lazarus*, was not far advanced in years. Of the twelve apostles, he loved particularly the youngest, which was S. *John*.

Lastly, what greater proofs can we have of the love *Jesus Christ* bears young people, than these two I am going to mention?

The first is, the assurance he has given, that all the favours which shall be bestowed upon them, shall be accounted as done to himself: *He that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me††.*

The second is, that dreadful menace which he afterwards uttered against those who scandalize little ones, that is, who draw them into sin: *He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hung about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea‡‡.* Is not this a great token of the singular affection *Jesus Christ* bears to youth, since he speaks

* Lib. 1. Confess. c. 19. † Ibid. lib. 5. cap. 9. ‡ Math. xix. Marc x. Luke xviii. § Matth. xix. 14. ¶ Marc. x. ¶ John iv. ** Mat. xvii. †† Mat. xviii. 5. ‡‡ Mat. xviii. 6.

speaks with so much zeal and indignation against those who assist in withdrawing them from his service?

These, dear *Theotime*, are convincing proofs of the love God has for you in your youth. After these assurances, can you refuse the love and service he demands of you in this age? Doubtless you cannot without the height of ingratitude, and without offering him a most enormous affront.

C H A P. V.

That they who do not consecrate themselves to God in their youth, offer him a most heinous injury.

Fifth consideration for serving God in youth.

THIS truth evidently follows from the two former; for if it be true, as we have shewn, that God desires and particularly demands the service of young people, and has the greatest love for that age, bestowing very singular favours to assist, and invite it to his service; it follows, that to refuse him the service he desires, and demands with so much justice, and not to answer the love he testifies to youth by so many favours and benefits, is to offer him a most heinous and enormous affront. But because this truth is of such consequence, that it can never be sufficiently inculcated, I shall make you see it more distinctly by the three following considerations, which I beseech you to examine well.

First reason of this injury.

1. Not to consecrate your youth to the service of God, is to refuse him a certain and assured time, which you may give him, to reserve for him an uncertain time, which you are not sure of having, and which is not in your power, *viz.* the time to come. This is the first degree of the injury you offer to God. You promise God to serve him when you are older. Who has told you that you shall live any long time? If you are not certain of being alive to-morrow, how are you sure of living ten years? There are more who die before twenty or twenty-five years of age than after. Now if you have no assurance of living a long time, is it not a great injury to God, to promise him a time not in your power, and refuse him the time present, which you enjoy? Do you not think, *Theotime*, he mocks God, who acts in this manner? And does he not evidently manifest that he has no design to serve him, if he defers consecrating himself to him till a time which perhaps may never come?

2. You

2. You not only reserve an uncertain time for God, but take away the better to give him the worse. For refusing to serve God, and apply yourself to virtue in your youth, (which is, as we said before, commonly less depraved by vice, and more favoured by heaven) you reserve yourself to a time when every thing conspires to render you unfit for the practice of virtue. The infirmities of the body which daily encrease, the inveterate bad habits wherein you will be engaged, the perplexity of worldly affairs, the solicitude of temporal things, the spirit and maxims of the world, which you have embraced; the world, which (as S. John says*,) is entirely plunged in vice and corruption, which is fond of nothing but pleasures, covetousness, and pride, and has no more thought of salvation and eternity, than if they were a dream.

Second reason.

All these things will be so many obstacles to your salvation, and entirely withdraw you from the service of God, if you do not prevent them in good time, by applying yourself in your youth to the avoiding of sin, and the practice of virtue. Judge then of the injustice you are guilty of, in deferring your services to a time when so many things conspire against it, and refusing to serve him in an age, when fewer obstacles and greater advantages present themselves. Doubtless this is a grievous injury; yet this is not all, take notice of what follows.

3. What completes the enormity of the injury offered to God, is, that refusing to serve him in your youth, you delay it till you have wearied yourself in the pursuit of pleasure, satiated your passions, and given full scope to the wicked inclinations of your age; so that the time you reserve, is but the remnant of what you have employed in sin, and the service of the Devil.

Third reason.

Do you comprehend, *Theotime*, the heinousness of this injury, and the indignity with which you treat your God, and your creator? Your soul is designed to be *the temple and dwelling of God*†; and you will not receive him, till after you have a long time prostituted it to the Devil, and defiled it with a vast number of crimes. All your life ought to be consecrated to the service of God, and will you employ the first and better part in the service of the Devil, reserving to God only that which is useless to sin? Can there be an indignity equal to this? What would you say of a man that should serve up to the table of a prince, nothing but the leavings of dogs and swine? This you would say was shameful; and have you not a horror of the same thing, of which you are far more guilty with respect to God, reserving for his service only the age wherein you can no longer gratify the passions you have so brutally cloyed during your youth? Is not this a horrible affront you offer to God? If God complained so much of those in the old law, who offered upon his altar profane and unclean bread; what complaints will he

not

* 1 John v. 19.

† 1 Cor. iii.

not make against you, who shall offer to him only the remnant of your life, already defiled with every vice? If he denounces a curse upon him who retains the better part for himself, and presents the worst to him in sacrifice: *Cursed, says he, is the deceitful man, that bath in his flock a male, making a vow, offereth in sacrifice that which is feeble to the Lord**. What maledictions ought not you to stand in dread of, you who not only sacrifice to him the worst, but even form a design of giving him nothing but the remainder of what has served to pleasure, and the disorders of your youth? I wish we had not seen so many effects of (this curse of God upon many young people, as we take notice of every day, by dreadful accidents, sudden deaths, the being forsaken by God, obstinacy in sin, and many other evils, which are often the effects of) thy just anger, O almighty God! by which thou daily punishes those who forget thee in their youth, to follow their wicked inclinations, and who would not serve thee but after they had served sin, their passions, and the devil.

C H A P. VI.

Remarkable instances of the aversion God bears to wicked young people.

Sixth consideration, the wrath of God against vicious young persons.

THIS truth is a necessary consequence of the three former: for how can it be otherwise, but that God should have an extreme aversion to those, who condemn the honour he does them, in particularly desiring their service; who are not moved with the love he bears them, but on the contrary treat him with so much indignity and contempt as we have shewn? God has an aversion to all sinners, as he himself has said: *I abhor the wicked* †, especially those, who have ungratefully abused his love and benevolence. Love offended is changed into indignation, and bounty despised becomes a merciless disdain.

Not only reason but experience evinces it, by the effects which God frequently shews of that aversion he has to vicious young people. I shall produce four very remarkable examples out of the sacred scripture, that no one may doubt of them, and that from these one may judge of others.

The first example is of the two children of *Juda*, the son of the patriarch *Jacob*. This man had seven children, the two elder whereof were wicked and vicious. Behold what the scripture says of the first, whose name was *Her*: *Her, the first born of Juda, was wicked in the sight of the Lord: and was slain by him* ‡. And immediately after it is said of the second, named *Onan*, that God struck him with death for a sin of impurity he had committed, which the scripture there calls detestable: *The Lord slew him, because he did a detestable thing* §. This sin, although detested by God himself, and chastised

* Mal. i. 14. † Exod. xxiii. 7. ‡ Gen. xxxviii. 7. § Gen. xxxviii. 10.

chastised with so exemplary a punishment, is unhappily but too common among youth, upon which it draws the divine indignation either visibly or invisibly.

The second example is, of the two children of the high priest *Heli*, called *Ophni* and *Phinees**. These two young men were employed by their father in the ministry of the temple and sacrifices, wherein they behaved themselves very ill, committing great irreverences in the temple, and crying injustices towards the faithful, who came to offer their sacrifices to God, requiring from them, by an insatiable avarice, more than was their just due: insomuch that the sacred scripture says, they were the children of *Belial*; (so it calls those whom it would signify to be wicked, and abandoned: for *Belial* signifies, without restraint or fear) having lost the fear of God, and the remembrance of their duty; moreover it adds, that their sin was very enormous in the sight of God. Their iniquity provoked God so much, that he sent *Samuel* to tell their father, who had been too negligent in correcting his children, that he would punish him with such rigour, as should serve for an example to all posterity; that he would exclude his family from the high priesthood, which he would give to another; that his offspring should die in the flower of their youth, and few should arrive at perfect age; and that his two sons, *Ophni* and *Phinees*, should die both in one day, and all their race should bear for ever the marks of their iniquity, which should never be expiated by victims and sacrifices.

All this happened as was foretold. A little while after *Ophni* and *Phinees* were killed, being defeated by the *Philistines*. On the same day the father, hearing the news of their death, fell down backward, broke his skull, and died upon the spot. Many other misfortunes happened that day; among the rest, the ark of God was taken by the enemies; and the rest of the prophecy was fulfilled to a tittle. How many misfortunes in one family, through the wickedness of two sons!

The third example is of *Amnon*, the eldest son of *David*†. The scripture mentions but one wicked action of his, yet that one so black and detestable, that it necessarily supposes many others; it being certain, that a man never arrives on a sudden at the last degree of impiety, and that great crimes are the effect of a soul abandoned by God for her past sins. This young prince neglected to curb his inclinations, permitted his heart to be overcome with unchaste love, in such a manner, that his brutal passion, which generally promotes crimes, making him break through the most inviolable laws of nature, brought him to love unchastely his own sister; and not obtaining her consent to such an abominable proposal, he adds force to lust, committing in one action two most enormous crimes, violence and incest.

But

* 1 Kings iii. and iv. † 2 Kings xiii.

But the divine justice soon showed how much it abhorred the crimes and wicked life of this young prince : for two years after he was killed by his own brother *Abfalom*, who had meditated this revenge all that time. O God, how terrible are thy judgments !

The fourth is of *Abfalom*, the third son of *David*, who was no better than his brother *Amnon**. He was proud, dissembling, revengeful, and highly ambitious, conceited of himself, and his own beauty, which, according to the scripture, was extraordinary. The first wicked action which the scripture relates of him, but which must needs have been preceded by many others, is the murder of his brother *Amnon*. By this action he lost his father's favour, and was banished from him for the space of five years, after which he was recalled, and admitted to his favour again. He was scarce returned to his father's court, when he contrived a grand rebellion against him : and having by his addresses gained the affection of the people, he retired to a small town, and was proclaimed king. After this he takes up arms against his father, forces him to fly from *Jerusalem*, and pursues him with a strong army, which he had raised to deprive him of his crown. What will the divine justice do here ? Will it connive at such a degenerate child ? Hear, *Theotime*, what the sacred scripture relates. *David* seeing himself brought to such streights by his son, was obliged to make head and oppose him. He sets in order the few forces he had with him, sends them to fight, gives him battle. *Abfalom's* men, though far more numerous, are defeated.

In this discomfiture (O the divine judgments !) it happened that *Abfalom*, endeavouring to save himself by flight, was carried under a great oak, and as he wore his locks very long, his hair by a strange accident, and particular permission of God, was so strongly entangled in the branches of the tree, that the mule he rode on could not carry him away, but continuing its course, left him hanging by his hair, without being able to disengage himself. *David's* soldiers seeing him in this condition, ran him through with a lance, and killed him on the spot ; although *David*, by an astonishing tenderness, when sending them to the battle, had expressly forbidden any violence to be offered to his person.

O divine justice ! thou plainly shewest that thou dost not connive at the iniquities of wicked children ; and although thou deferrest for a time the chastisement they deserve, to give them leisure to repent, thou afterwards punishes most severely their obstinacy in sin, and the affront they offer to thy goodness, with which thou expectest their repentance.

Behold, four examples from the sacred scripture, which shew the greatness of God's aversion to vicious young people ; the scripture might furnish many others. Ancient histories are full, and daily experience produces but too many examples in these our days.

Take

* 2 Kings xiii and xiv.

Take notice of one thing worthy of consideration; that in the four precedent examples are instanced three sorts of sins, which render young people particularly odious to God, and which generally occasion their ruin. In the first and third, the sin of impurity. In the second, the contempt of religion and holy things. In the fourth, the contempt of parents, and rebellion against paternal authority.

An important remark.

CHAPTER VII.

That salvation generally depends on the time of youth.

WHAT we have said in the four last chapters, laid before you the obligation incumbent on you of serving God in your youth, out of respect to the desire he has thereof, and the love he bears you, which you cannot slight, without being guilty of a most heinous injury, and incurring his aversion and disgrace. Now I will convince you of this obligation from a principle of self-interest, and shew you clearly, that your salvation almost entirely depends on the life you lead during your youth.

Seventh and most important motive which obliges young people to virtue.

I wish, *Theotime*, that you, and all those of your age, would thoroughly understand and never forget this truth, unknown to the greatest part of men, but the ignorance of which is the ruin and damnation of many. I wish all men rightly understood, that the immense eternity of happiness or misery, which waits them after this life, depends upon this first part of our time, which all the world slight, and which the most part employ in wickedness.

To convince you of this truth, I shall produce no less than the sentiment of the sacred scripture, that is, of the Holy Ghost, whose words are so express, that it is impossible to doubt of it.

For why doth it in so many places exhort young people to think of their salvation betimes, and to apply themselves to virtue in their youth, except it were to shew of how great importance that time is for their salvation?

Why does it say in *Ecclesiastes*; *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come**? From whence comes it, that it assures us in the book of *Proverbs*: *A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it†*; that is, the manner of life which he has begun? Wherefore does it say by the prophet *Jeremy*, *That it is good for a man when he hath borne the yoke from his youth‡*; that is, has applied himself to virtue, and to bear the pleasing yoke of God's commandments?

VOL. I.

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Why

* Eccles. xii. 1. † Prov. xxii. 6. ‡ Lament. iii. 27.

Why, in *Ecclesiasticus*, are youth so earnestly exhorted to virtue, by those excellent words, able to soften the most insensible hearts? *My son, from thy youth up receive instruction, and even to thy gray hairs thou shalt find wisdom. Come to her as one that ploweth, and soweth, that is, with care and labour, and wait for her good fruits. For in working about her thou shalt labour a little, and shalt quickly eat of her fruits. How very unpleasant is wisdom to the unlearned, and the unwise will not continue with her. But with them to whom she is known, she continueth even to the sight of God**. All the rest of the chapter is but a continual exhortation to young people to be virtuous.

Wherefore in the twenty-fifth chapter does it say, *The things that thou hast not gathered in thy youth, how shalt thou find them in thy old age†*?

Lastly, among the books of sacred scripture, why was there one expressly made for the instruction of youth, which is that of *Proverbs*? Does not all this manifestly discover, that the Holy Ghost would give men to understand that the time of youth is of greater consequence than the greatest part imagine; and that all happiness or misery of man, whether in this life or in the next, depends generally on that time well or ill employed; this observation being generally true, that those secure their salvation, who in their youth are bred up in the fear of God, and observance of his commandments; and that those who have not been educated in this fear of God, or cast it from them to follow sin with greater liberty, are unhappily lost.

All this truth is grounded on these two principles. The first is, that those who have followed virtue in their youth, easily persevere the remainder of their life: the second, that on the contrary, those who have given themselves over to sin at that time, with great difficulty amend, and frequently never. We shall display these two truths still more at large.

C H A P. VIII.

That those who have followed virtue in their youth, generally persevere in it the rest of their life.

EXPERIENCE renders this proposition so *Eighth motive.* evident, that it is taken for granted in the sentiments of the sacred scripture and all wise men. To make you more sensible of it, I shall lay before you the reason thereof, built upon those authorities.

The first is, that habits acquired in youth, remain a long time, and are not easily shaken off.

* Eccli. vi. 18, 19, 20, 21, 23. † Eccli. xxv. 5.

*A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it**; that is, very rarely. "The first impressions made upon tender minds (says S. *Jerom*†) are with difficulty effaced; wool which hath taken its first tincture, doth not easily return to its former whiteness; and an earthen vessel keeps long the smell and taste of that liquor wherewith it was first seasoned." Wherefore the scripture says, *That it is good*, that is to say, very important, *for a man when he hath borne the yoke from his youth*‡, because having acquired it at that time, it is easily preserved the remainder of our life.

S. *Bernard* says §, "That we need not seek any other cause why many old men are found to be destitute of every virtue, but because they acquired them not in their youth, the fittest time for that purpose." And S. *Jerom* ||, describing the excellent qualities of old age in those who applied themselves to learning and virtue in their youth, says, "That becoming more knowing with age, more steady by experience, wiser in process of time, they gather the agreeable fruits of the ancient labours of their youth."

The second reason is, because, as we said above, youth is the time of trial and temptations, which being overcome, we easily surmount all that follow.

The temptations to impurity are certainly the most violent, the trials frequent, but victories very rare, says S. *Austin* ¶. They have shaken the constancy of those whom torments could not overcome, as S. *Jerom*** observes. Now, although these temptations be common to all ages, yet they are stronger and more frequent in youth, which, as S. *Jerom*†† says, is a continual combat against chastity; youth being environed with the occasions of sin, and stimulated by the provocations of the flesh, suffers very much in preserving its purity, like fire almost extinguished with green wood heaped upon it.

But when by the assistance of divine grace, which, as we have shewn above, is greater and more abundant in youth, the victory is gained in these first encounters; the other trials which are to be undergone in the course of life, which according to sacred scripture is a perpetual combat ‡‡, are surmounted with far less difficulty.

The reason is, because temptations diminish in proportion as they are overcome; divine grace increases, by how much better use is made of it; and a heart accustomed to conquer, yields not easily, since it daily acquires new strength by its victories. *Sampson* having exerted himself in fighting with a lion, became invincible. And *David* having in his youth surmounted lions and bears, he afterwards, though very young, overthrew the giant *Goliath*, the terror of *Israel*, and was never overcome in all the battles in which he engaged.

C 2

Dear

* Prov. xxii. 6. † Ep. ad Læt. ‡ Lam. iii. 27. § Lib. de ord. vitæ. § Epist. ad Nepot. ¶ Serm. 250. de temp. ** In. vit. Paul. †† Epist. ad Nepot. ‡‡ Job. vii.

Dear *Theotime*, if you knew the repose and tranquillity they enjoy, who have behaved themselves gallantly in the combats of their youth, the desire of partaking of that peace would powerfully encourage you to resist with all your vigour ! Learn it from the Holy Ghost by the mouth of the wise man : *My son*, says he, *search for wisdom, and she shall be made known to thee, and when thou hast gotten her, let her not go : for in the latter end, thou shalt find rest in her, and she shall be turned to thy joy. Then shall her fetters be a strong defence for thee, and a firm foundation **.

I add the third reason, which is, that God augments his graces, and multiplies his blessings upon those who have lived piously in their youth, in order to preserve them in that good path, they have already entered by his grace.

I cannot prove this truth better, than by producing the assurance which God himself gives you in the sacred scripture : *The Lord*, says the wise man, *giveth wisdom ; and out of his mouth cometh prudence and knowledge.* And he not only gives it, but takes care to continue it ; for it is he, who will keep the salvation of the righteous, and protect them that walk in simplicity. He adds afterwards, *If wisdom shall enter into thy heart, and knowledge please thy soul, (he speaks of the knowledge of virtue) counsel shall keep thee, and prudence shall preserve thee. That thou mayst be delivered from the evil way, and from the man that speaketh perverse things, &c. from the strange woman and from the stranger, who softeneth her words, &c. That thou mayst walk in a good way : and mayst keep the paths of the just **.

There are a great number of like passages in sacred scripture, which assure us of that singular protection and assistance of God towards those who follow virtue in their youth, and it is easy to confirm them by examples from the same scripture.

C H A P. IX.

This truth confirmed by remarkable examples, taken out of the sacred scripture, of those who having been virtuous in their youth, continue so all their life.

First example, of **T**HE first example I shall produce is that of Joseph.

Joseph, a model of virtue in his youth †. At sixteen years of age he abhorred vice in such a manner, that the wicked example of his brethren could never corrupt his innocence ; on the contrary, not being able to endure their wickedness, he gave notice thereof to his father, drew upon him the enmity of his brethren, who meeting him one day in the fields, conspired to murder him ; but having a horror of dipping their hands in his blood, they resolved to let him down into an old pit,

* Eccli. vi. 28, 29, 30. † Prov. ii. ‡ Gen. xxxvii.

pit, with a design of leaving him there to perish. This poor child, not able to soften their cruelty, by prayers and tears, was obliged to yield, putting all his confidence in God, who never abandons those who love him. In this he was not deceived; for his inhuman brethren, struck with the horror of so barbarous a crime, changed their first resolution. They drew him out of the pit, and sold him to merchants, then passing by, who carried him into *Egypt*, where he was sold to a lord of that country. *Joseph* being with his master persevered in virtue and innocence of life, which drew down the blessing of God upon the house of his master, who soon discovered his merit, and conceived a great affection for him.

Behold how *Joseph* spent the first part of his youth, that is, until about the age of twenty. See the consequence of it, and how he passed the rest of his life; wherein I observe three remarkable occasions, in which his virtue underwent the severest trial.

The first was about that age when he sustained the most violent attack that chastity could undergo, being solicited by his master's wife to consent to a detestable adultery; but the fear of God, wherein he had been bred up, gave him such a horror of the crime, that all the importunity and violence of that lewd woman could never stagger his chastity, which since has been an example to all ages.

From this temptation he fell into a greater: for this wicked woman not being able to compass her impious design, accused him of attempting her chastity, imposing falsely upon him the crime she herself had committed. His master provoked at this, ordered him to be bound and cast into prison, where he continued to the age of thirty. This was a severe temptation, and a shock which might easily have overturned a virtue but lately acquired; to be accused and deemed guilty of a crime he abominated, and to suffer as if he had committed it! But *Joseph* continued immovable in his first virtue; and as he had learned patience in his youth by the persecution of his brethren, he bore this with wonderful constancy, comforting himself in the conviction of his innocence, of which God was both witness and protector. God, who had always been with him, left him not on this occasion; but, as the sacred scripture says*, descended with him into the pit that he might assist him with his grace, and wonderfully deliver him, as he did presently after.

To these two trials succeeded the third, yet greater. This was the elevated station to which he was raised: for having interpreted *Pharaoh's* dream by the knowledge God gave him of things to come, this king not only delivered him out of prison, but made him the first man in his kingdom, over which he gave him a general charge, with absolute power to dispose of all things according to his will, commanding his subjects to obey him as himself†. In this high station which generally dazzles men's eyes, and soon destroys an ordinary

* Wisd. xv. † Gen. xlv.

ordinary share of virtue, *Joseph* remained firm in his primitive innocence, always like himself. Forgetfulness of God, pride, covetousness, revenge, the usual attendants on unlimited power, could never find admittance into his breast. Having an opportunity of revenging himself on his brethren, who came into *Egypt* to buy provisions during a severe famine, he not only omitted it, but received them with such tenderness and marks of affection, as drew tears from those who read the scripture account of it. He carried himself in his station with so much justice*, that no complaint was ever made of his conduct; on the contrary the *Egyptians* proclaimed him their deliverer, being freed from want during a seven years famine, by his great prudence, for which he was entitled in those countries, *The saviour of the world*. He persevered thus in virtue and the fear of God, in the midst of grandeur, from the age, of thirty when he was raised to that fortune, even to the age of an hundred and ten, wherein he died. O, *Theotime*, reflect well upon this example, and learn from it, what virtue acquired in youth is able to effect.

I should content myself with this example, if that which follows were not also admirably well adapted to the same purpose. It is of *Tobias*, the father of young *Tobias*, whose conduct as well in his youth, as in a more advanced age, the scripture declares to be worthy of our admiration.

Second example,
of *Tobias*.

He was a young man of the tribe and city of *Nephthali*†; and although he was the youngest of all his tribe, yet nothing childish or youthful appeared in his actions. And when all others went to sacrifice to the golden calf of *Jereboam* king of *Israel*; shunning their company, he went alone to *Jerusalem* to the temple of the Lord, and there adored the God of *Israel*, offering to him faithfully his first-fruits and tithes. *These and such like things did he observe*, adds the scripture, *when but a boy according to the law of God*‡.

O the admirable life, *Theotime*, of a young man, who acted nothing childish, that is, nothing contrary to virtue; who permitted not himself to be carried away by the torrent of ill example, continuing stedfast in the service of God, when the rest to a man abandoned their Creator! A youth spent so virtuously, could not but be followed by a holy life, as you shall see.

Tobias being come to man's estate was led captive by the *Assyrians*, with all his countrymen, to the city of *Ninive*: being there, he departed not from the path of virtue which he had so happily entered in his youth.

For, first, as he had learned in his youth to resist the wicked example of others, he permitted not himself to be corrupted in his captivity by the example of his countrymen, who ate licentiously the meats of Gentiles, though prohibited by the law of God.

Secondly,

* Gen. xlv. † Tob. ii. ‡ Tob. i. 8.

Secondly, having deserved a particular regard from the *Assyrian* king by his virtuous conduct, he had leave to go to any part of the kingdom: he visited his fellow captives, admonishing them concerning their salvation, and their perseverance in the service of God.

Thirdly, the affliction of the captives encreasing, he daily visited and comforted them, distributing what he was able to give them, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and with an unparalleled charity buried all the dead he found, notwithstanding the displeasure of the king, which he had incurred by that action even to the danger of his life. But what is yet more admirable, is, the patience with which he bore the melancholy affliction of blindness, which befel him by an unexpected accident in the fifty-sixth year of his age. One day as he returned home wearied with the burial of many dead, he chanced to fall asleep under a wall, from the top whereof the dung out of a swallow's nest fell upon his eyes, and took away his sight. This was doubtless a very great affliction, and a most severe trial; but he supported it with such admirable patience that the sacred scripture compares it to that of *Job*, and, what is very remarkable, attributes it to the piety and fear of God in which he had lived during his youth. Behold what it says: *Now this trial the Lord therefore permitted to happen to him, that an example might be given to posterity of his patience, as also of holy Job. For whereas he had always feared God from his infancy, and kept his commandments, he repined not against God because the evil of blindness had befallen him. But continued immoveable in the fear of God, giving thanks to God all the days of his life* *. O how admirable is the effect of virtue, which has always increased with age! He was delivered from his affliction four years after, and living to the age of 110; he died in peace, after he had made, as the scripture observes, a continual progress in the fear and service of God. Thus, *Theotime*, do they live, thus do they die, who have followed virtue in their youth.

A third example is *Eleazar*, that great martyr *Third example,* of the Old Testament. He was an ancient man, *of Eleazar.* very venerable for the number of his years, but more so for his virtue, in which he had improved from his infancy. When king *Antiochus* persecuted the *Jews*, in order to make them renounce their religion, and the worship of the true God, this holy man was apprehended to be constrained thereto by force of torments, which could never shake his former piety. And when some of the by-standers exhorted him to comply, at least in appearance, to free himself from torture; but he began to consider the dignity of his age, and his ancient years, and the inbred honour of his gray head, and his good life and conversation from a child: and he answered without delay †, and with an invincible courage, that he would rather die, than consent to such a criminal action: upon which his
torments

* Tob. ii. 12, 13, 14.

† 2 Machab. vi. 23.

torments were redoubled, and he suffered death with incredible patience.

Learn, dear *Theotime*, from this example and the preceding, what virtue acquired in youth is able to do, when confirmed by a continual exercise of good actions ; and labour to be such now, as you would wish to be all the remainder of your life.

C H A P. X.

That those who have been addicted to vice in their youth amend with great difficulty, and often never.

Ninth motive, of great importance for living well during youth.

O *Theotime*, that I had a pen capable of imprinting this important truth more lastingly in your heart than in brass or marble, and making you perfectly comprehend the great and dreadful difficulty of amendment after a youth spent in vice !

A difficulty so great, that it is almost impossible sufficiently to express it ; and on the other side so general, that we cannot consider it attentively, without being touched with a lively sorrow, seeing such numbers of Christians, and principally of young people, who groan under the tyranny of a vicious habit, which being contracted in their youth, and encreased with age, leads them to perdition ; from which if they chance to recover, it is with incredible pains and combats, and by a manifest miracle of divine grace. Learn, dear *Theotime*, to avoid this danger, and endeavour to conceive its greatness, either that you may entirely prevent it, or quickly withdraw yourself, if you be already engaged therein.

This great difficulty springs from three causes. The first is the incredible power and force of a wicked habit, which being once rooted in the soul, cannot be plucked up but with great pains. All habits have commonly this quality, that they continue a long time, and are with much difficulty removed. But amongst others, wicked habits are such as adhere more strongly, and are not so easily changed ; because corrupt nature is more prone to evil than good. Hence the scripture says, *That the perverse are hard to be corrected*, which makes *the number of fools*, that is, of sinners, *infinite* *.

But among wicked habits, those contracted in youth are the strongest, and with most difficulty overcome : for the passions, which are the instruments of vice, unrestrained at this time by virtue, encrease with age, and as they encrease give vice daily new strength, and render it at length unconquerable.

For this reason the same scripture, in order to express the force of a vicious habit contracted in youth, delivers a sentence which young people ought to have frequently in their mind : *His bones shall be filled with*

* Eccles. i. 15.

with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust †. That is, the vices and wicked habits of youth become so deeply rooted in the soul, that all the remainder of life is tainted with them, and death alone, as we daily see, can put a final period to them.

The cause is very evident ; for vice when in possession of a soul, encreases and strengthens the passions, the passions corrupt the judgment, so that it mistakes good for evil, and evil for good : the judgment being once corrupted perverts the will, which runs blindly into sin, and from thence proceeds all the evil ; because, as *S. Augustin* says †, “ The will not governed turns to an eager desire of sin, “ and by our gratifying this desire it is formed into a habit, a habit not “ resisted becomes a necessity ; ” that is, an extreme difficulty in avoiding sin. Hence when a person is arrived at this pitch, there are no hopes of his amendment ; because as another author (*S. Isid.*) adds, “ Necessity terminates in death, by exposing him who lies under it “ to final impenitence.”

The second cause of this great difficulty, is the decrease of divine grace : for as God multiplies his favours to those who receive them with humility, and employ them for their salvation ; so he diminishes them to those who abuse and condemn them. Now if he deals thus with mankind in general, much more with youth ; on whom he bestows many favours, as long as they remain deserving of them, so he withdraws his kindnesses when they abuse them, as we have made to appear by the experience of those, who having been favoured with particular obligations from God in their youth, presently become sensible of a great diminution of those favours, occasioned by the ill use they have made of the same.

God himself threatens this by a prophet, when he speaks thus : *In that day the fair virgins and the young men shall faint for thirst. They that swear by the sin of Samaria* ‡ ; that is, who make profession of adoring the idols which the city of *Samaria* adores. This thirst is not only a corporal, but a spiritual thirst, and the want of divine grace, of which it is spoken immediately before ; *I will send forth a famine into the land : not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord* §.

The third cause of the great difficulty of correcting the ill habits contracted in youth, is the power of the Devil, who gains ground in proportion as your sins increase, and the grace of God is diminished. This is the proper effect of sin, viz. after depriving a soul of the grace and protection of its Creator, to subject her to the dominion of the Devil, and engage her more and more in that unhappy slavery, in proportion as she continues in vice. O, *Theetime*, who can sufficiently express the deplorable state of a soul reduced to that servitude, under the tyranny of her mortal enemy, who employs all his engines and devices to destroy her without recovery ; by sug-

* Job xx. 11.
viii. 11.

† Lib 8. confes. cap 3.

‡ Amos viii. 13, 14.

§ Amos

gelling all temptations that are likely to draw her into sin ; by furnishing her daily with new occasions of destruction ; by diverting her from those that might withdraw her from her unhappy state ; by hurrying her from sin to sin, from one vice to another, till the measure of her iniquities being filled up, she is at last abandoned to the devil, by a visible effect of the divine wrath !

Thus does this cruel enemy treat those whom he has under his power, by a just permission of God, who thus rejects those who withdraw themselves from his service and friendship, and who refusing to submit themselves to the sweetness of his law, and the abundance of his favours and blessings, most justly deserve to be abandoned to that cruel master, who breathes nothing but their destruction, and will never cease to persecute them till he has plunged them into eternal damnation*. How unhappy are all those who are fallen into this deplorable slavery ! yet they are still more miserable, who, whilst they are engaged therein, think not of seeking their deliverance.

C H A P. XI.

Examples of those who have corrected the vices of their youth, yet with very great difficulty.

IF this truth be manifest from reason, as we have seen, yet it is more so from experience, which furnishes us with examples of persons, who, after being plunged into vice during their youth, by a special mercy, have been reclaimed. I shall content myself with

The example of producing one of the most striking, which is that of S. *Augustin*. We have in the person of S. *Augustin*. this saint, the most remarkable instance that an-

tiquity affords, to shew clearly how difficult a thing it is to correct vices contracted in youth. I shall only relate what he himself says of it in his *confessions*, by a particular inspiration of God, to teach all young people an abhorrence of vice, and to warn them of the dangers and rocks whereon he unfortunately ran, where he infallibly would have perished, if God had not withdrawn him by a miracle of his divine mercy, which he has not shewn o m any others.

He says †, First, that he spent his childhood in all the wicked inclinations that age is capable of ‡, viz. untractableness, disobedience, lying, laziness, inclination for play and pleasure, a disrelish for all that was good, susceptible of every thing contrary to modesty and decency ; flying labour, but fond of diversions, learning nothing but what he ought not to have known. Such was his childhood.

These

* Jer. lvi. † Lib. 1. confes. cap. 10. ‡ Cap. 12 and 13.

These first inclinations, as it usually happens, were followed by far greater disorders. Being come to sixteen years of age*, that mind which had not been restrained in the first disordinate excesses of its nature, hurried him into all the vices of which his age was capable†. He‡ owns but with sighs and lamentations, that sensuality and lascivious passions did so powerfully seize on his heart in that age, that they plunged him into such sins of impurity, as are not fit to be expressed; so that neither the fear of God, nor the discreet admonitions of his mother, nor the infamy of sin, nor any other consideration, could lay the least restraint upon him in those early fallies; on the contrary he became so abandoned, that he not only lost all shame for vice§, but took a pride in it, and was ashamed not to be accounted as vicious as the most depraved; believing it a great misfortune to be thought innocent, when he heard others glory in their wickedness.

He began this life in his father's house, upon his return from his studies, where he dwelt a whole year; after that, he was sent to *Carthage*, to finish his studies, where he continued the same manner of life till the age of nineteen.

Here, *Theotime*, take notice of four or five *A considerable*
causes of this corruption of *S. Augustin* in that *remark for young*
age. *men.*

The first was idleness, wherein he spent his sixteenth year in his father's house, at his return from his studies, which is a time very dangerous to young people¶.

The second was the little care his father took of his behaviour, nor heeding whether his son were virtuous, provided he became learned and eloquent, which is too common a fault among parents.

Thirdly, the contempt of his mother's admonitions, who knowing her son's disposition, exhorted him continually not to permit himself to be carried away by the desires of impurity; but to no effect.

Fourthly, the wicked example of those of his age so much prevailed upon his mind, that he endeavoured to be more impious, to the end that he might resemble them; and when he saw himself surpassed in wickedness, he feigned some crime which he had never committed, fearing to be so much the more despised; by how much he appeared less vicious than others.

Fifthly, the great liberty his father gave him for play and recreations, as himself also takes notice.

These things hurried him into vice, and retained him in his disorders the space of three years; after which he began to open his eyes, and acknowledge his miserable state. Here, *Theotime*, you will discover the immense difficulty of withdrawing from the vices contracted in youth.

Being

* Cap. 19. † Lib. c. cap. 1. ‡ Cap. 2. § Cap. 3. ¶ Aug. lib. 2. cap. 2.

Being nineteen years of age, he began to entertain some serious thought concerning salvation, which God inspired him with in reading a book of *Cicero*, whereof the title is *Hortensius*, containing an exhortation to wisdom.

The reading of this book, as he himself says, presently changed his mind and inclinations, and made him turn his thoughts upon God. He began to condemn temporal and perishable goods and pleasures, and to aspire with an incredible eagerness after the beauty of wisdom, which never perisheth. From that time he began to depart from vice, and sincerely return to God. Who would not have believed, but that these good motions would have been soon followed by a perfect conversion? Yet alas, *Theotime*, what is not a wicked habit contracted in youth able to do! Vice and wicked inclinations so possessed his heart, that these thoughts of conversion proved ineffectual. The weight of his inveterate bad habits, replunged him into his former state, in which he remained from the nineteenth to the thirtieth year of his age; and the vices contracted in three years of his youth, kept him in slavery twelve whole years. During which time he not only remained in his former disorders, but fell into others yet greater: for as immodesty leads to error and blindness, he gave into the heresy of *Manicheus*; wherein he continued nine years, joining to his heresy the keeping of a concubine; in which state he lived to the time of his conversion.

Being about thirty years of age, he thought more seriously of his conversion than formerly, as he describes it in the sixth book*. But harken, *Theotime*, with what trouble he compassed his design.

After that first thought, he remained yet about two years in his evil ways, deferring daily, as he says himself, to be converted unto God, and to seek in him the life of grace, not reflecting on the death he caused in himself by his wicked life. Much time was requisite for clearing his understanding, and rooting out the errors of his past life, and convincing himself of the necessity of a conversion, as he relates in his seventh book.

His understanding being convinced, his will did not submit. Vicious habits in such a manner possessed his heart, that they made him dread his amendment. He ought to have rooted out these vices one after another, ambition, covetousness, impurity. Ambition and covetousness were soon banished, but that cursed impurity kept still a firm hold of him†.

He was so enslaved therewith, that he thought it impossible to recover his liberty, esteeming it a great unhappiness to be deprived of those ignominious pleasures, which are the source of all misfortunes‡.

In short, the difficulty of his conversion was so great, that after many combats, which he underwent in his soul during the space of fourteen or fifteen years, after the solicitude, prayers and tears

* Chap. xi. † Cap. 7. ‡ Lib. 6. cap. 11.

tears of his pious mother, who followed him by sea and land from his own country to *Carthage*, from *Carthage* to *Rome*, from *Rome* to *Milan*, to reclaim him from vice, and gain him to God; (for to her next to God he owed his salvation :) After the strongest remonstrances of his best friends; after many conferences with the great *S. Ambrose*, and other persons eminent for virtue and learning; after all the interior motions of divine grace, his conversion was miraculously completed. In the last struggles betwixt nature and grace, a voice from heaven cried aloud to him, *Tolle & lege, Tolle & lege; Take and read, Take and read*; admonishing him to open the New Testament which he had by him. He took it, and having opened it, found these words of the apostle, by which the Holy Ghost wrought in his soul his entire conversion: *Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences**. O God, is it possible that the change of a soul should cost so much pains, and so many remedies to cure them!

This is not yet all, *Theotime*; *St. Austin* being absolutely converted, was not freed from his former difficulties: for although he never relapsed after his conversion, when he began to do strict penance, and to lead a holy and angelical life; nevertheless he felt a long time after † the consequences of his former life, and of frequent and very violent temptations; which being occasioned by the old habits of his youth, cost him much trouble to preserve himself in holiness, according to the account he has given in the tenth book of his *confessions*, and following ones, where he describes the different temptations with which he was assaulted.

O, *Theotime*, read again and again this example, consider attentively all the particulars, and see to what extremity a vicious habit in youth, when not resisted in time, is able to reduce a person. Fly the danger where this saint was like to perish, and where many daily suffer shipwreck.

There is yet the example of *Manasses* in the following chapter, and that of *St. Jerome*, Part III. cap. 9. art. 3.

C H A P XII.

Examples of those who have never corrected the vices of their youth.

AS in a shipwreck, where a ship is lost in a storm, there are many who perish, and very few who save themselves by swimming or otherwise: thus in the shipwreck of virtue, which many suffer in their youth, the number of those who are eternally lost is very great, but of those who escape very small.

You

* Rom. xiii. 13, 14. † Lib. 10. cap. 30.

You will conceive the smallness of this number, when you shall know, *Theetime*, that in the history of the Old Testament, a thing almost incredible, there is found but one example, in the person of *Manasses* king of *Juda*. For this one, it produces a vast number of others, who perished in the storm, and died in the vices of their youth; some after a long life, others being snatched away by death in the prime of their age. I shall here set you down some examples.

First, of all the kings of *Israel*, who to the number of nineteen reigned over the ten tribes of *Israel*, when the division was made of that kingdom from that of the tribe of *Juda* after the death of *Solomon*, there was scarce one, but was extremely wicked from his youth, and continued so to his death.

And although the scripture does not make express mention of their youth, nevertheless it gives us sufficiently to understand that they were all wicked in that age, except *Jehu*, who was afterwards perverted like the rest.

Amongst the kings of *Juda*, who likewise reigned to the number of nineteen after *Solomon*, there were six who were good; that is, *Asa*, *Josaphat*, *Ozias*, *Joathan*, *Ezechias*, *Josias*; all the others were wicked. Those who were good began from their youth, and continued such all their life; the greatest part of those who were vicious, began their wickedness in their younger years, and never altered their conduct.

Thus it is said of king *Ochozias* *, that he began to reign about twenty-two years of age, was wicked, and attached to the idolatry of impious *Achab* king of *Israel*, which was taught him by his mother *Athalia*, sister of that wicked king; he reigned but a year, at the end whereof he died in his wickedness.

It is said of *Achaz* † that he was twenty years of age when he began to reign; that he did not apply himself to good ‡, and to the service of God, but followed the example of the idolatrous kings of *Israel*, and that he far surpassed them in impiety, wherein he died, after he had continued in vice upwards of sixteen years.

Amon § reigned at the age of twenty-two, and became follower of the vices of his father *Manasses*, but not of his repentance, and died in his sins at the end of two years, murdered by his own servants ¶.

Joachim || began at the age of twenty-five, and reigned eleven years; during which time he was wicked like his ancestors, and died in his iniquities, without being lamented by any one, and also deprived of the honour of burial, according to the threat of the prophet *Jeremy* **.

His son *Joachin* †† having succeeded at the age of eighteen, reigned but three months, at the end whereof he deserved for his sins to fall into the hands of *Nabuchodonosor*, and was sent into *Babylon*, where he died a long time after.

Sedecias,

* 4 Kings viii.

¶ 4 Kings xxi.

† 4 Kings xvi.

|| 2 Chron. xxxvi.

‡ 2 Chron. xxviii.

** Jerem. xxii.

§ 4 Kings xxi.

†† 4 Kings xxiv.

Sedecias *, the last of the kings of *Juda*, being come to the crown at the age of twenty-one, was also wicked like his predecessors; and having continued in his iniquities for the space of eleven years, he drew upon himself and his people the most rigorous effect of that vengeance, with which God had long threatened the *Jewish* nation. For in the ninth year of his reign the city of *Jerusalem* was besieged by *Nebuchodonosor* king of *Babylon*, and after two years siege it was taken, pillaged, and put to fire and sword, the temple of God ransacked and burnt; and whoever had escaped the fury of the sword, or famine, were sent into captivity. *Sedecias* himself flying with his children, was taken, and brought before the proud King; who, after venting his fury and indignation, caused his children to be butchered before his face, and afterwards pulled out his eyes, and sent him captive into *Babylon*, where he died in misery, in just punishment of his iniquities.

We must add to those examples these mentioned in the sixth chapter, since all those of whom we spoke in that place, died in their sins, and in punishment of sins committed in their youth.

These examples are very common in sacred scripture, the contrary are very rare; and as I have said, we find but one in the Old Testament, who was sincerely converted after he had lived wickedly in his youth, *viz. Manasses*, and he in so extraordinary a manner, that this example shews clearer than noon day, the dreadful difficulty of reforming the vicious inclinations of youthful years.

This prince † having lost his father *Ezechias*, one of the most pious kings of *Juda*, at the age of twelve years inherited his crown, but not his virtues: for soon forgetting the holy example and wise documents he had received from him, he addicted himself to every kind of vice and impiety. His iniquities daily encreased until the fifteenth, or according to others, till the two-and-twentieth year of his reign, wherein God punished his crimes in an exemplary manner. He was taken by the *Affyrians* in the city of *Jerusalem*, sent captive into *Babylon* loaded with irons and chains, cast into a frightful prison, where he suffered every degree of misery and persecution.

Being reduced to this extremity, he began to open his eyes, and call upon God in his afflictions, whom he had forgotten in his prosperity. He acknowledged his iniquities, and sued for pardon with a truly contrite heart, and by the force of tears and prayers obtained from God his deliverance: after which he did penance for his sins, and lived in holiness all the remainder of his life, even to the age of sixty-seven, when he died.

S. *Jerome* adds to this history a very remarkable circumstance, which he received from the tradition of the *Hebrews*: for expounding what the scripture says in general terms ‡. That *Manasses* after he was in distress prayed to the Lord his God §, he says, that it was at the

* 4 Kings xxiv and xxv. † 4 Kings xxi. ‡ Hieron. in quest. Heb. in Paral. § 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12.

the approach of a frightful death, to which he was exposed. He was doomed to die in a great brazen vessel, pierced with many holes, set upon a hot fire; which heating the vessel, and penetrating it on every side, must have consumed that miserable prince by its flames, by so much the more cruel, as they were slow in execution. He was shut up in this vessel, and the fire kindled under him. In this dreadful approach of death, this unfortunate prince did not address himself to God, but first to the idols which he had adored; so strangely was he blinded by his former sins. But when he perceived that it was in vain to invoke their assistance, he called to mind a sentence of the sacred scripture which he had often heard from his father in his youth, by which God promises his assistance. *When thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him: yet so, if thou seek him with all thy heart, and all the affliction of thy soul*.*

He presently raised his heart to God with sighs and lamentations, and begged his deliverance with such a contrition for his sins, that God shewed him mercy, and not only delivered him from that frightful death, but from slavery, and brought him back to Jerusalem, where he spent the rest of his life after the manner I have already described. See here, *Theotime*, a conversion after a wicked youth, but a conversion purchased at a dear rate.

C H A P. XIII.

Of the great evils which spring from a wicked youth.

*Tenth motive
which obliges young
people to virtue.*

THE greatest of evils is that whereof we have spoken, viz. the loss of salvation, which befalls many through sins of their youth; it being certain that sins committed in that age are the original cause of damnation to many. But besides that, there are many others issuing from the same source, which are necessary to be known, dear *Theotime*, to the end that knowing them, you may conceive a greater horror of the cause which produces them.

A R T I C L E I.

The first evil, viz. death, which the sins of youth hasten in many.

I PUT in the first place immature death which happens to many young persons in punishment of their sins.

I do not mean, that all those who die in the flower of their age, die in punishment of their sins, nor that all those, who follow vice in their youth, are punished with untimely death.

I know

I know very well, that the pious sometimes depart in the prime of their youth, and that this death is a recompense of their virtue, and an effect of the love God bears them according to that of the sacred scripture, in the book of *Wisdom*: *The just man, if he be prevented with death, shall be in rest* * and salvation; his virtue having rendered him agreeable to God, purchased his love, and obtained for him to be taken out of this world, where he lived amongst sinners. God withdrew him betimes, lest corruption should taint his mind, and his soul be deceived with the false appearance of the vanity and pleasures of the world, which delude men and make them love those things which are most opposite to their salvation.

I know also very well, that there are many sinners who live a long time, and who grow old in the vices contracted in their youth, like him whom *Daniel* calls by that name, *O thou art grown old in evil days* †; and that the hastened death of the just, who died in the flower of his age, *condemneth the long life of the unjust* ‡: because the former gains heaven in the short time he lived, and the long life of the latter serves only to multiply their crimes, and encrease their damnation.

Yet it is not to be doubted, but that many die young in punishment of their sins, and that the sins of that age hasten the death of many. The scripture confirms this by examples, and daily experience puts it beyond dispute.

Job, speaking of the wicked, says, *Before his days be full, he shall perish: and his hands shall wither away. He shall be blasted as a vine, when its grapes are in the first flower, and as an olive-tree that casteth its flower* §.

Solomon in his *Proverb* says, *As a tempest that passeth, so the wicked shall be no more* ¶. In his *Ecclesiastes* ||, he admonishes you not to abandon yourself to sin, nor to be of the number of the unwise, that is, of sinners, *lest*, says he, *thou die before thy time*, that is, sooner than you should have done according to the natural course of your life.

In the eighth chapter of the same book, that wise king, moved with a just indignation against the sinner, wishes he may never prosper, and that his days may be abridged; he even expresses his desire, that all those who entertain no respect for the Deity, who have the audaciousness to insult the presence of the Divine Majesty, may like the shadow perish in a moment.

All these expressions are clear in scripture, and the examples are there yet more evident. See what we alledged in the preceding chapter, concerning *Ochozias*, *Amon*, *Joachim*, and *Sedecias*; in the sixth chapter, in the persons of the children of *Juda* and *Heli*, and in those of *Amnon* and *Absalom*.

Although we had no other proofs of this truth, the examples we daily see, discover it too clearly. How many young people do we

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D

see

* *Wisd.* iv. 7. † *Dan.* xiii. 52. ‡ *Wisd.* iv. 16. § *Job* xv. 32, 33.
¶ *Prov.* x. 25. || *Chap.* 7.

see die, some in a burning fever, or other like distemper; others in a quarrel; others in duels, the destruction of so many souls; others killed in war; others perish by dreadful and unexpected accidents? All these deaths, which are but too frequent, are often the effects of the divine wrath against young people, who contemn his favours, and refuse to serve him in an age to which he is particularly entitled. O, *Theotime*, have a dread, lest these punishments befall you.

A R T I C L E II.

The second evil which springs from the sins committed in youth; blindness of mind, and obdurateness in vice.

CORPORAL death is not the only, nor the worst effect of the sins of youth; that interior blindness and obdurateness in evil, which they cause in the soul, is no less common, yet far more deplorable and dreadful. *Weep for the dead*, says the wise man, *for his light hath failed: and weep for the fool*, that is, for the sinner, *for his understanding faileth*. *The mourning for the dead is seven days*: that is, a short time, *but for a fool and an ungodly man, all the days of their life**. For how can we consider without tears and sorrow so great and universal a misfortune, which we see in many young people, whom the sins of their youth leads to a hardness of heart, that abandons

them to vice without restraint? The number of those is very great, who, after having spent their youth in the disorders of sin, especially of impurity, become unconcerned for their salvation, blind to their own interest, obdurate in evil, contemning the most wholesome admonitions, glorying in their iniquities, scoffing at all the good they see performed by others, and wholly bent upon gratifying their pleasures and depraved appetite, hasten their own ruin, without a possibility of being withheld. O, *Theotime*, is not this a deplorable evil? But I wish it were not so frequent as it is great. *S. Augustin* had unhappily experienced it in his own person, as he himself relates in his own *confession*; where he deplores his misfortunes in words capable of moving the hardest hearts, and which deserve to be here cited at length, to teach young people how they ought to dread the fatal effects of the sins of youth.

“That lascivious concupiscence of the flesh, and boiling of my youthful blood, exhaled such clouds into my mind, that they overspread it with dense obscurity, and in such a manner cast a mist over it, that could not discern the serenity of chaste love from the darkness of impure lust. Both of these raising a turbulent confusion in me, dragged my frail youth into the precipice of all sort of concupiscence, and plunged it into the gulf of wickedness*.”

He

* Eccl. xxii. 10, 13. † Lib. confess. cap. 2.

He adds, that the brutal passion of immodest love was like a chain, which kept him bound, and that the noise of this chain continually rattling, had made him interiorly deaf, and hindered him from hearkening to any good advice; like a beast in strong chains, the motion of which hinders it from hearing any other noise. What is yet very remarkable, he adds, this deafness was a punishment of the pride of his soul, which kept God at this distance, and thus enslaved him to sin.

Behold, dear *Theotime*, whither the sins of youth lead, and whither yours will infallibly bring you, if you withdraw not yourself entirely, and without delay.

This subject of blindness and obstinacy in sin, occasioned by a disorderly youth, deserves a long discourse; but it shall be more amply treated in Part 2. chap. 8. art. III.

A R T I C L E III.

The third evil, the loss of not becoming what divine providence designed.

THIS evil is too visible; there needs no other proof than daily experience. How many youths being likely by their early dispositions to become useful in any employ, either to the honour of God or public good, suddenly fall off and disqualify themselves for what nature seemed to have designed them, by spending the rest of their lives in sloth and idleness? like trees covered with blossoms in the spring, which a nipping frost strips, and renders unfruitful all the rest of the year.

This happens not only to those in whom the sins of youth either hasten death, or bring an obduracy in vice, but very frequently to those who have only withdrawn themselves from sin after the first disorders of youth, and by losing in idleness, (the constant companion of vice) the most precious time of all their life, have become useless and incapable of doing good. If they have not absolutely lost that time, they are become, by their repeated disorders, unworthy of the employments they were capable of, and for which God had designed them.

That you may understand this the better, remember that God by his providence designs young people for different states, wherein he would employ them for his service and their salvation. But there are two conditions required, the first is, that they qualify themselves by their own industry during their youth; the other, that they do not render themselves undeserving by their sins. Whence, if young persons fail in either of these conditions, that is, if they neglect to qualify themselves for what God designs, or if while they are so employed they abandon themselves to vice, they never arrive at the stations for which they were at first intended; or if through presumption they rashly engage themselves in employments above

their capacity, they never can discharge their then respective duties, and consequently are exposed to almost inevitable perdition.

This truth is grounded upon sacred scripture. When God promised to *David* the kingdom of *Israel* for himself and his posterity, it was upon this condition *, that he and his offspring should live in the observance of his commandments †.

A little while before, he had taken away the honour of priesthood from the family of the high priest *Heli*, because he and his children were become unworthy by their sins. Although in his first declaration the priesthood was always to remain in that family, but with this condition, that they should not render themselves unworthy : the words are very clear in the first book of Kings ‡.

This procedure appears most evident in the case of *Saul* first king of *Israel*. God had given that kingdom to him, and his family, but upon condition, that he should keep his commandments. It happened this prince transgressed the orders of God on two remarkable occasions, in consequence whereof he was rejected from the kingdom, which God had prepared for him.

The first was, being one day in his camp, forced by his enemies to engage in battle, he offered sacrifice without waiting the arrival of the prophet *Samuel*, who had forbidden him to attempt any thing till his return. The sacrifice was scarce ended, when the prophet came and said to him : *Thou hast done foolishly, and has not kept the commandments of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee. And if thou hadst not done thus, the Lord would have established thy kingdom over Israel for ever. But thy kingdom shall not continue §.*

The second occasion was, when having overcome the *Amalecites*, he spared the life of their king, and preserved their flocks and all their riches, against the command God had given him not to spare any thing, but to consume all with fire and sword. *Samuel* reproached him for his disobedience, and declared to him from God, that he should be no more king of *Israel*. *Forasmuch, says he, as thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath also rejected thee from being king ||.*

Learn from these examples, *Theotime*, that God sometimes designs men for employments which their sins prevent their attaining, or continuing a long time in them if once entered upon. Be assured, if you live wickedly in your youth, you have great reason to fear that God will reject you from that condition to which he had designed you, and that you will never be fitted for any important charge ; God refusing you the honour of employing you when you are at a fit age, as you have neglected to serve him in your youth, and make yourself worthy of your vocation, and deserving of the assistance of his grace.

ARTICLE

* 2 Chron. vi. 16. and xxxiii. 8. † Ps. cxxxi. 12. ‡ Chap. ii. § 1 Ki g xiii. 13, 14. || 1 Kings xv. 23.

A R T I C L E IV.

The fourth evil springing from the sins of youth ; the source of vice amongst men.

THIS evil will seem to you at present incredible, but you will understand it clearly upon the least reflection.

For first, if it be true, as we have shewn, that the vices of youth cannot be overcome without the greatest difficulty, it follows, that a great part of the corruption we see amongst men springs from that which they had contracted in their earlier years.

Besides, it is certain, that bad children become wicked fathers, and wicked fathers make their children vicious: as they having lived in disorder during their youth, without taking any care to amend, they concern themselves but little about bringing up their children in the fear of God ; and thus wickedness is spread from father to son into distant generations.

Now if this be verified in the greatest part of young persons, it is more evidently so in those who apply to study, of whom it is true to say, that their wicked life causes the greatest part of the sins and disorders of the world ; because they are the men that attain to dignities, whether ecclesiastical or civil, wherein they behave themselves according to the inclinations and habits they learned in their youth, and according to the first impressions they received. Now when such behave ill in these stations, the evil is not confined to their persons, but extends to all those whom they ought to govern, instruct, or edify ; such persons, instead of receiving from them examples of virtue, gather nothing but the imitation of their vices, and the corruption of their manners.

In a word, vicious students become, in the church, wicked priests, ignorant, unprofitable to God and his church, and frequently scandalous, idle, covetous, worldly and debauched incumbents ; pastors incapable of their charge, who acquit themselves very ill, to the great detriment of souls. In the world, gentlemen that are proud, quarrelsome, duellists, immodest, blasphemous, libertines. In the courts of justice, wicked judges, corrupted, accepters of persons, and who commit many injustices for money, favour, or fear, through the ignorance or rashness, with which they give sentence ; lawyers that are wranglers, impostors, and cheats. In the civil state, magistrates incapable of their charges, neglectful of their duty, who see vice and hinder it not, which, in the sight of God, makes them sharers in the guilt of those crimes they do not prevent. And from the corruption of these four sorts of persons springs the iniquity of the people, and the overflowing of vice in the world. Thus it may be truly said, that the wickedness of students is the first source of the greatest part of the vices and disorders of the world.

Consider attentively, dear *Theotime*, these four evils one after another, and learn by their enormity of how much importance it is for you to apply yourself to virtue in your youth.

CHAP.

C H A P. XIV.

That the Devil uses all his endeavours to lead young people into vice.

Eleventh motive for serving God in youth.

TO be convinced of the importance of dedicating yourself to God in your youth; you must remember, that the Devil, that sworn enemy of man's salvation, fearing nothing more than to see you virtuous in your youth, employs all his endeavours to gain over you and all those of your age, that he may ruin you without hopes of recovery.

The attempts of the Devil to destroy young people.

This truth is manifest from all that we have said before. That cursed fiend, who studies nothing but to rob God, as much as he can, of the honour due to him, and men of the happiness prepared for them, knows very well, that to lead youth into vice is the means of taking from God the first and greatest acknowledgment which men owe to him: In the second place, how injurious to God a wicked life of youth is: thirdly, the dreadful consequence of this, viz. a deep engagement in sin, an hardness of heart, and impatience of mind. Moreover, he understands very well, that there is no other certain way to fill the earth with iniquities, and to damn mankind. This is the reason why he employs all his industry to corrupt the innocence of youth, the first source of salvation and all other blessings. He knows well, that to poison the waters of a fountain, it is sufficient to cast venom into the spring, which communicates it easily to all the brooks: and that to conquer a realm, the best method is to secure the frontier places, which give entrance into the heart of the country.

This cursed fiend understands well how to put in practice the mischief he taught *Pharaoh**, to whom he suggested the destruction of all the male infants of the *Israelites*, that so he might exterminate the people of God.

He exercises daily both the malice and the cruelty of *Nabuchodonosor* †, who having taken king *Sedecias* with his children, at the sack- ing of *Jerusalem*, caused the children's throats to be cut before the father's face, and satisfied himself with putting out the father's eyes, without taking away his life. Thus this cruel enemy employs all his malice to murder the children by sin, and strives to blind interiorly the parents, that, neither seeing nor caring for the loss of their children, they may not deliver them from such imminent danger.

The same king returning into his country, proud and elated with his victories, carried, as the fairest part of his triumph, the young people of the city of *Jerusalem* prisoners before him, as is related by the

* Exod. i. † 4 Kings xxv.

the prophet *Jeremy**. He left nothing in that desolate city more to be lamented, than the deplorable loss of the young people, which the same prophet bewails above all its other calamities.

Thus, dear *Theotime*, this detestable fiend, who, as the scripture says, is established king over all the proud, has no greater reason insolently to attempt to triumph over the holy church, than by the multitude of young people which he keeps in slavery by sin. And this pious mother accounts no loss more deplorable than that of her dear children, which the enemy snatches from her in their youth, some by one vice, others by another, but most by the sins of impurity, which is the strongest chain by which he holds them in captivity; thus exercising the rage he has conceived against her from her first establishment, and continuing the war he has sworn to wage against all her children, according to the revelation made to St. *John* in the *Apocalypse* †.

Lastly, This war of the enemy of mankind against young people is a thing so manifest, that the same S. *John* writing to the faithful, and congratulating every age for the blessings most peculiar to them, expresses a particular congratulation to young people for the victory they gave gained over the enemy, as being those who are most persecuted. *I write to you, young men, says he, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God bideth in you and you have overcome the wicked one* ‡.

Happy are all those young people to whom with truth we may say, that they have conquered the enemy of their salvation. I represent unto you here the war he wages against those of your age, that we may congratulate you in that manner; and that by the persecution he raises against you, you may know first how necessary it is that you should be virtuous in your youth, since the Devil endeavours so powerfully to corrupt you. Secondly, with how much courage you ought to resist the attempts of that cruel enemy, who seeks your destruction with so much fury. How is it possible you should not stand in horror of that enemy, and dread, more than death, to let yourself be overcome by him, who seeks all ways to destroy you for ever?

C H A P. XV.

The conclusion of all that has been said in this first part.

IT is time to put an end to this first part; and, in recapitulating all that we have said to represent to you, in short, the great obligations you have to consecrate yourself to virtue in your youth.

*Read attentively
this chapter.*

It

* Lam. i. † Chap. xii. ‡ 1 John iii. 13, 14.

It is certainly then, *Theotime*, of great consequence that you should be virtuous in your younger years, and that the good or evil life of youth is not trifling, nor a thing that deserves little care or regard, as the greatest part of the world thinks; but that it is a business of high importance, the truth of which is founded upon all that is great and sacred in what concerns the service of God, and salvation of men.

1. You are obliged to serve God in your youth, because you ought to acknowledge him your Creator and sovereign Master, for the being you have received from him, and on account of the most sublime and excellent end for which he has created you, having made you for nothing less than to possess him eternally in heaven, after you have faithfully served him upon earth.

2. On account of the great favour he has shewn, in calling you to Christianity and the Catholic Religion, out of which there is no salvation.

3. Because the service of young people is singularly pleasing to God, since he loves them with a particular affection, and is pleased to confer many benefits upon them.

4. Because you cannot refuse him your service, without offering him a very heinous injury.

5. By reason he hath an incredible aversion to wicked young people.

6. Because your eternal salvation has a great dependance upon the life you lead in your youth: so that if you set your affection upon virtue in your younger years, you will easily preserve it the remainder of your life; and if you follow vice, you cannot withdraw yourself but with great difficulty, and perhaps not at all.

7. To avoid the heavy misfortunes which spring from the wicked life of youth; untimely death, obduracy in sin, the loss of God's grace, and the increasing of vice amongst men.

8. And, lastly, because of the persecution which the Devil raises against young people, whom he continually endeavours to withdraw from the service of God, and ensnare betimes in disorders, that he may destroy them without recovery.

After all these reasons, I ask you, *Theotime*, whether you now hesitate what you have to do? Are not these considerations powerful enough to convince you of the obligation you have to consecrate yourself to virtue in your youth? And if you be convinced thereof, what do you mean? What is your design and resolution for the future? Perhaps hitherto you have not comprehended the greatness of this obligation; but now, understanding it clearly, what judgment ought you not to expect from God, if you be *rebellious to the light**; and act like those wretches, who say to God, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*†.

The *Jews* being returned from the captivity of *Babylon*, the prophet *Esdra*‡ caused the law of God to be publicly read unto them, from whence they had received no instruction during the seventy years of their captivity.

That

* Job xxiv. 13.

† Job xxi. 14.

‡ 2 Esdras viii.

That people had scarce begun to hear the law, when they wept bitterly, and made the air resound with their cries and lamentations: so that the priests and levites who read the law, were more employed to stop their tears and comfort them, than to instruct them. These poor people sadly deplored their unhappy ignorance of their duty, an ignorance which their own negligence had occasioned.

O, dear *Theotime*, I beseech the divine Goodness by his grace to work the same effect in your heart. After reading the truths I have represented to you, is it possible that you should not be touched with the force of truth, and the care of your own salvation? And that after reading all these reasons, which show the strict obligations you have to the service of your Creator, you should shut the book without making any reflection upon yourself, or taking proper resolutions for the future? I conjure you by the honour and respect you owe to God; by the love you owe to his Son *Jesus Christ* your gracious Saviour; by the concern you ought to have for your eternal salvation: I conjure you, I say, that you do not read these truths unprofitably; and that when you have read them, you do not cast the book out of your hands, until you have made a full resolution to think seriously on your salvation: to that effect, firmly resolve to lead a virtuous life during youth, preserving the grace you have received, or correcting your past life by a holy and virtuous one, if it has been disorderly.

It is here, where you must open your eyes to see yourself, and deplore your past offences, and the blindness which has produced them, saying with *S. Augustine*, "Wo, wo be to the darkness wherein I have lived! wo be to the blindness which hath hindered me from seeing the light of heaven! wo to my past ignorance, wherein I knew not thee! I give thee thanks, O God, whom I acknowledge to be my illuminator and redeemer, because thou hast enlightened me with thy grace, so that now I know thee. I have known thee too late, O ancient truth; I have known thee too late, O eternal verity*."

Here it is that you must hearken to the voice of your eternal Father, who calls you to him. *To-day*, says the prophet, *if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts*†. You must return to him with great confusion, for having so much abused his goodness, and behaved like an ungracious child towards so tender a father; deploring from the bottom of your heart your ingratitude and infidelity, with those excellent expressions of *S. Bernard*: "God by his bounty hath been pleased to shew himself a father towards me, but I have not carried myself like a son towards him; with what face can I raise my eyes towards heaven, to so good a father, having been so undutiful a child! I blush for having committed actions unworthy of my extraction. I am confounded at my past life, because I have so much degenerated
" from

* Solil. cap. 33. † Psalm xciv. 8.

“ from so good and holy a father. Weep, mine eyes, and turn
“ yourselves into a fountain of tears, and let shame cover my
“ face * !”

O happy tears ! dear *Theotime*, blessed confusion ! which coming from God, and through God, have wrought in you a holy penance, and will put you into the path of eternal salvation, and happily conduct you in the ways of virtue, which I shall immediately lay before you by the assistance of his divine grace. Let me entreat your serious attention.

* S. Ber. Serm. 16. in Cant.

THE END OF THE FIRST PART.

T H E
INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH
IN
CHRISTIAN PIETY.

P A R T II.

Of the necessary means of acquiring virtue during youth.

WHEN the holy man *Tobias* had ordered his son to go to the city of *Rages*, to his friend *Gabelus*, he commanded him at the same time to seek the means for performing that journey, and endeavour to find a guide to conduct him thither securely. The good child, complying with the orders of his father, meets, by a special providence of God, the angel *Raphael* in the habit of a traveller, who promised to conduct him, and bring him back in safety, all which he faithfully performed *.

Thus, dear *Theotime*, having shewn you the indispensable obligations you have of entering the way of virtue in your youth, let me now tell you, that you ought to learn the means for well performing so important a journey.

I shall lay them before you in this second part; and if you carefully enquire after them, God will send his angels to conduct you in the way, and assist you with his grace to arrive happily at the end.

C H A P. I.

Wherein true virtue consists.

THE first means of acquiring virtue is the knowledge of it, and the discerning of solid piety from that which is false and imaginary. *First means, the knowledge of true virtue.*

Many seem to love virtue, who are far from it, because they love not virtue as it is in itself, but as they represent it to themselves, every one according to his own inclination. Some think themselves virtuous, when they are not of the number of the wicked. Others *Many sorts of false virtue.*
place

* Tob. iv. and v.

place virtue in abstaining from certain vices, from which they have a kind of averſion, though ſubject to others no leſs criminal in the ſight of God. Others eſteem themſelves virtuous if they follow ſome religious practices, although, on the other ſide, they wholly neglect the interior regulation of their conſcience, too often deſiled with mortal ſins. All theſe are ſo much more to be lamented, as they imagine themſelves to be in a good way, when they are abſolutely out of it; and thinking to arrive by that courſe at the port of ſalvation, they find themſelves at length in the direct road to perdition, verifying in that reſpect that ſaying of *Solomon*: *There is a way which ſeemeth juſt to a man: but the ends thereof lead to death* *.

Virtue, *Theotime*, does not depend on the opinion of men, it is the work of God; from him then muſt we learn its rule, ſince he alone can direct in what manner he will be ſerved.

Hearken then to what God ſays of it in the ſacred ſcripture, and he will teach you how *True virtue conſiſts in the fear of God*. ſacred ſcripture, and he will teach you how wiſdom, that is, virtue conſiſts in fearing God, and flying abſolutely from ſin, and that he has thus inſtructed man in his creation. *Then*, ſays *Job*, that is, in the beginning of the world, *God ſaid to man, behold the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom: and to depart from evil, is underſtanding* †.

He teacheth the ſame thing by the royal prophet, by whom he gives you this general virtue, *Decline from evil and do good* ‡.

Wiſe *Solomon* informs you of the ſame truth: *Fear God*, ſays he, *and keep his commandments: for this is, all man* §; in that conſiſts the perfection of man, for that he was born, that is his laſt end and real happineſs.

In ſhort, the ſacred ſcripture acknowledges no other wiſdom or piety than the fear of God, which it calls *the beginning, the fulneſs, and crown of wiſdom* ¶.

Now this fear is not that which is purely ſervile, that is, apprehends more the puniſhment than deteſts the ſin; but it is a loving fear of the children of God, which makes them hate ſin becauſe it diſpleaſes God, and love good becauſe it is agreeable to him. Like the fear and reſpect a good child bears his father, which makes him fearful to offend, and diligently ſeek all means of pleaſing him.

So that, *Theotime*, according to the maxims of the divine ſchool, true virtue conſiſts in the fear of God, which produces a voluntary obſervation of his commandments, and cauſes a fear and deteſtation of offending God above all things, and ſeeks the means to pleaſe him and retain his favour. This alone ought to be accounted virtue, and that, which is not directed by this certain and infallible rule, is to be deemed falſe piety.

CHAP.

* Prov. xiv. 12. † Job xxviii. 28. ‡ Pf. xxxvi. 27. § Eccleſ. xii. 13. ¶ Pf. cx. 10. Eccli. i. 20. Ibid. 22.

C H A P. II.

That to acquire virtue we must desire it.

THE knowledge of a thing is not sufficient to acquire it, we must love and ardently desire it. Love is the first mover of our actions; it causes us to undertake great things, animates their prosecution, and finds means of crowning the same with success. It is this be certain in all other things we undertake, it is yet more infallible in virtue; because the love and desire of virtue is one part of virtue itself, and a very powerful means to attain it.

Second means, the desire of wisdom.

It is the means the wise man gives you, dear *Theotime*, and which he himself made use of with very good success. In the sixth chapter of the book of *Wisdom*, he says, *That Wisdom is glorious, and never fadeth away, and is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them who seek her, she preventeth them that covet her, so that she first sheweth herself unto them**. But hear how he himself made use of these means in his youth, and learn to conform yourself to that perfect original.

He says, in the seventh chapter, that having considered the common misery of men, who are all born in weakness and ignorance, he began earnestly to desire this wisdom, and to be freed from these afflictions. *Wherefore*, he says, *I wished and understanding was given me: and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me: and I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her. Neither did I compare unto her any precious stone: for all gold in comparison of her is a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay. Now all good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands†*.

Having afterwards described the beauty and wonders of wisdom, he adds in the eighth chapter, *Her* (this divine wisdom) *have I loved, and have sought out from my mouth, and have desired to take her for my spouse, and I became a lover of her beauty. I proposed therefore to take her to me to live with me: knowing that she will communicate to me of her good things, and will be a comfort in my cares and grief‡*.

O what an excellent example, *Theotime*, is this, to make you understand how necessary and efficacious the desire of virtue is towards obtaining it! Learn from this example to set your affection on virtue, and ardently to desire it. Be convinced that there is nothing besides it desirable in the world, nothing can worthily satisfy your love, or can render you happy and contented; without it you will be miserable both in this life and the next.

CHAP.

* *Wisd.* vi. 13, 14. † *Wisd.* viii. 2, 9. ‡ *Jam.* i. 5.

C H A P. III.

Of prayer, the third means of acquiring virtue.

Third means,
prayer.

OF all the means for attaining virtue this is the most important. It is not sufficient to desire it, we must search for it with all diligence; and that we may successfully seek it, we must go to the fountain-head, and beg it from him who is the author of it, and bestows it on those who beg it as they ought. *If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all abundantly †.*

This is the means which wise *Solomon* employed, together with that ardent desire of wisdom, whereof we have just now spoken. For in the same place he says *, that after he had considered all the perfection of wisdom, he conceived such an ardent love for it, that he searched on all sides to find it; and that in consideration of the innocence of his tender age, which he had hitherto preserved untainted, God gave him to understand that wisdom is the effect of his grace, which he could not obtain without God's assistance, whereupon, addressing himself to the author of all wisdom, he requested it of him with all the strength of his heart, in the prayer we shall set down at the end of this chapter.

Besides this excellent example, the scripture also furnishes you with that of the wise author of *Ecclesiasticus*, who describes thus the means he made use of in his youth to acquire virtue. *When I was yet young, before I wandered about, I sought for wisdom openly in my prayer. I prayed for her before the temple, and unto the very end I will seek after her. My foot walked in the right way, from my youth up I sought after her. I stretched forth my hand on high, and I bewailed my ignorances of her. I directed my soul to her, and in knowledge I found her †.*

This is the way these great men took to acquire wisdom in their early years. The scripture proposes them to all young people as the model they ought to imitate for attaining it.

It behoves you, *Theotime*, who by the grace of God aspires to that wisdom, to imitate them, and follow the way they have shewn. Beg daily of God, with all the ardour of your affection, this wisdom, which removes ignorance, banishes sin, and leads by the path of virtue to real felicity; offering to him from the bottom of your heart that excellent prayer of *Solomon*.

God of my fathers, and Lord of mercy, who hast made all things with thy word, give me wisdom that sitteth by thy throne, and cast me not off from among thy children: for I am thy servant, and the son of thy hand-maid, a weak man, and of short time, and falling short of the understanding of judgment and laws. Send her out of thy holy heaven, and from the throne of thy majesty, that she may be with me, and may labour with me, that I may know what is acceptable with thee: for she knoweth

* *Wisd. viii.* † *Eccli. li. 18, 19, 20, 26, 27.*

knoweth and understandeth all things, and shall lead me soberly in my works, and shall preserve me by her power. So shall my works be acceptable.*

With this prayer, or some such like it, if you say it as you ought, you will obtain all that you shall ask for: but remember that it must have these three conditions to be efficacious; it must be humble, fervent, and perseverant.

Humble, acknowledging that you cannot obtain wisdom or virtue but from God alone. *Three conditions of prayer.*

Fervent, to beg it with a most earnest desire. Perseverant, to beg it daily, as there is no day wherein the divine grace is not necessary to preserve or encrease it.

C H A P. IV.

That we must love and seek after instruction.

BESIDES the means of prayer, instruction is *Fourth means,* also necessary for obtaining virtue. Though *instruction.* none but God can give wisdom, yet ordinarily he does not bestow it but by the ministry of men, by whom he is pleased we should be conducted in the path of virtue, inspiring by his grace our hearts with his holy truths, at the same time that men teach us by their words. For this reason has he established in his church pastors and doctors, as the apostle says, to teach men divine truths, and conduct them in the way of salvation.

Now, if instruction be necessary for all men, it is particularly for young persons, who by reason of their age have little knowledge of the maxims of wisdom, and are incapable of discovering them without assistance.

It is not then sufficient, dear *Theotime*, to beg daily wisdom and virtue from Almighty God, you must desire and seek after instruction and direction in the way of it, from them who know it.

This desire of instruction is so necessary for obtaining virtue, that it is the beginning thereof, according to that of the wise man; *The beginning*, says he, *of her (wisdom) is the most true desire of discipline †.*

And, lastly, that you may be fully convinced, read attentively this excellent exhortation of *Ecclesiasticus*: *Son*, says the wise man, *if thou wilt attend to me thou shalt learn: and if thou wilt apply thy mind, thou shalt be wise. If thou wilt incline thine ear, thou shalt receive instruction: and if thou love to hear, thou shalt be wise. Stand in the multitude of ancients that are wise, and join thyself from thy heart to their wisdom, that thou mayst hear every discourse of God, and the sayings of praise may not escape thee ‡.*

Now there are many ways by which we may receive instructions in virtue, as preaching, and books of piety, of which we shall speak hereafter.

* Wisd. ix. 1, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12. † Wisd. vi. 18. ‡ Eccii. vi. 33, 34, 35.

hereafter. But that which is most necessary for you at your age, is the particular direction of a wise and virtuous person, who may teach you the true way to salvation. For this reason the wise man adds to the former words: *If thou see a man of understanding, go to him early in the morning, and let thy foot wear the steps of his door* *.

C H A P. V.

Of the necessity of a guide in the way of virtue, and particularly during youth.

Fifth means, the importance of a guide.

THIS means, *Theotime*, is the most important of all those which conduct us to virtue; it is the guide who makes all the others succeed, and without whom it is almost impossible you should employ them with success. The way to salvation and real wisdom is a road unknown to you; you have need of a guide to direct you. This is a certain maxim of the sacred scripture and holy fathers.

If the blind lead the blind, says the Son of God, both fall into the pit *. How much more if one blind man leads himself in a way he knows not? *Woe to him that is alone, says Solomon, for when he falleth he has none to lift him up* †. For this reason in the *Proverbs* he often admonishes young persons, *Be not wise in thy own conceit* §: *for he that trusteth in his own breast is a fool* ||. *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that is wise harkeneth unto counsel* ¶. Good *Tobias*, instructing his son, gave him this advice among others; *Seek counsel always of a wise man* **. *Ecclesiasticus* has already said above, that when you see a prudent and understanding man, you must listen to his instructions, and be frequently with him. But above all, take the counsel he gives you in chapter xxxvii.

Be continually, says he, with a holy man, whomsoever thou shalt know to observe the fear of God, whose soul is according to thy own soul: and who, when thou shalt stumble in the dark, will be sorry for thee ††, that is, who mutually love one another; watching that you fall not, or raising you if you be fallen. By this you see not only the necessity of a guide in the way of virtue, but the qualities he ought to have, clearly expressed, *viz.* that he must be a virtuous man; that he ardently desire the salvation of him whom he directs, and be able to support him whenever he is in danger of falling, and of course, that he be endowed with prudence and knowledge equal to that design.

S. *Jerome* following these maxims of sacred scripture, gives the same counsel to a young man who is desirous of advancing in virtue

* Eccli. vi. 36. † Mat. xv. 14. ‡ Eccli. iv. 10. § Prov. iii. 7. || Prov. xxviii. 26. ¶ Prov. xii. 15. ** Tob. iv. 19. †† Eccli. xxxviii. 15, 16.

tue. " My advice, says he, is, that you converse with men of piety. Be not your own master, nor enter a way unknown to you without a guide, lest you should mistake your road, and perish in your wandering ; or going faster or slower than need requires, you be tired with your haste, and so return, or fall fast asleep in your journey *."

Make choice of a discreet and virtuous confessor, from whom you may learn how to serve God in your youth. Let him direct you in the path of virtue, teach you the true maxims of piety, and discover to you what you ought to follow, and what to avoid ; let him bring you back into the right way when you have left it, and raise you when you shall fall ; let him warn you of the dangers you are likely to run into ; and teach you how to resist temptations, and cure your ill habits ; let him encourage you in virtue ; awake you when you are sleepy in the way, and with-hold you from running too fast, lest you should fall from your first zeal and fervour into remissness, and from remissness into vice, which easily happens to young people. Behold here the advantages of having a good director, whom you will stand in need of upon all occasions.

For this end lay open unto him from time to time your conscience ; let him know the true state of your interior. Respect him, as a man by whom God speaks and directs you ; put a confidence in his direction and counsels, hearken attentively to his admonitions, be exact in putting in practice his advice, give him an account of the use you have made of it ; be not ashamed to discover unto him all your sins ; above all beware of following their example who, having committed some greater sin, confess themselves to another, out of a foolish shame they have to declare their sins to their ordinary confessor. To do this, is to render the direction of a ghostly father entirely unprofitable, to expose one's self to fall into many sins, and in the end to be utterly lost. No, no, you must have towards your confessor the confidence of a child towards his father, of a sick person towards his physician, so as equally to discover all that is in your mind good and bad.

The physician, if he be not informed of a disease, cannot cure it ; and the patient who dissembles, exposes himself to great danger, even death itself. Never hide any thing therefore from your director, nor be afraid of making a full discovery of all that has happened. If you sincerely repent, you will have no difficulty of confessing your sins to him, who, by knowing your conscience, is best able to prescribe a remedy suitable to your disposition.

But to find this so necessary a director, you must beg of God from the bottom of your heart, that you may meet with a good one, and without doubt he will comply with your request. Ask also the counsel of some prudent and virtuous person. And when you have

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found

* S. Hieron. ep. Rusticum.

found him, change him not easily without necessity; and if you should lose him by death, change of dwelling, or otherwise, make choice quickly of another.

O, *Theotime*, how happy would you be, if you lived thus under a good director! you would walk with assurance in the path of salvation, and would advance very much therein; whereas going without a guide, you will always be in danger of straying out of the way and being lost.

Call to mind one remarkable thing, which the scripture recounts of king *Joas* *. That king had been educated by the high priest *Joiada* in the fear of God, instructed in his law, and directed in the way of virtue from the age of seven years till after forty; during all that time he lived holily; and the scripture attributes the cause to the conduct of that pious man. *Joas*, says the scripture, *did that which was right before the Lord all the days that Joiada the Priest taught him* †. But he did not continue in that state: for *Joiada* being dead, that unhappy prince, no longer restrained by the good documents and prudent counsels of his religious director gave himself up to licentiousness, and to the disorders of a wicked life; by which he drew upon himself many disasters, and a miserable death, which God sent him presently after. This example will teach you what value you ought to set on a good director in the way of virtue.

CHAP. VI.

Of a general confession.

Sixth means, a general confession.

PENANCE being a sacrament instituted by *Jesus Christ* to blot out the sins of Christians, and to restore them to the grace of God, there is no question, but it is not only a very profitable but necessary means of acquiring virtue and sanctity, which ought to begin by cleansing one's self from vice.

For this reason I here propose it as the first step to be taken in the design you have formed of giving yourself to God.

Now to the end this means may prove profitable to you, I advise you to begin with a general confession of all your life; and this for three reasons:

First, because it frequently happens, that the precedent confessions were invalid: as when one has concealed therein any mortal sin, too often the case of young people; or when one confesses with too little preparation, without sorrow for his sins, and without resolution of amendment. In these cases a general confession is necessary.

Secondly,

* 4 Kings xii. 2 Chron. xxiv. † 4 Kings xii. 2.

Secondly, because although one see not an evident invalidity in the former confessions, yet nevertheless there is reason to have some doubt, because of so many defects with which they ordinarily abound through the negligence of penitents, who confess themselves with very little preparation, almost without any sorrow, and without any amendment. A general confession supplies these defects, and, if well performed, puts our conscience into a state of security.

Thirdly, if it be not at all necessary, it will be always very profitable; for three great benefits you will receive thereby: the first with respect to yourself, the second with respect to your confessor, and the third with regard to God.

First, in respect to yourself; by bringing your past life before your eyes, it makes you know how far you are removed from the way of your salvation; humbling you before God in the acknowledgment of your misery, it will make you take notice of your depraved inclinations in order to correct them, conceive a desire of amendment, and dedicate yourself entirely to Almighty God.

Secondly, with respect to your confessor; it serves to give him a perfect knowledge of your conscience, that he may better direct you, and give you advice according to your necessity.

Thirdly, with regard to God; it will be a means of meriting from him more abundant graces to bring about your more perfect conversion. These graces he will communicate to you in proportion as he shall see you humbled before him, and penitent for your offences. *A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*.*

To perform well this confession, First, have principally in view the amendment of your life, and the withdrawing of yourself from sin, the better to put yourself in the way of virtue.

The end of a general confession.

Secondly, prepare yourself seven or eight days before-hand; during which time; employ yourself, 1. In calling to mind your sins. 2. In conceiving a great sorrow, and a firm resolution of amendment.

Preparation.

For this end, employ some time every day in examining yourself according to the order of the commandments of God and of the church, and the seven capital sins. For the greater facility, make use of some book of confession, and write down every day what you shall take notice of.

But let your principal concern be about contrition, which is the most necessary and most difficult, and wherein but too many are defective. Here we must employ, 1. Prayer to obtain it of God. 2. The reading of such subjects as may raise in you a horror of sin, and a desire to serve God. This must be a fervent prayer, and a serious and attentive reading.

Contrition.

Second means to obtain contrition.

Withdraw yourself once or twice a day into a private place, and there prostrate yourself before God, beseeching him humbly and ardently that he would touch your heart, and give you his grace rightly to conceive the grievousness of sin, and the injury it offers to his infinite goodness, and such contrition, as may effect a perfect change in your life.

Afterwards apply yourself to the reading of some book which may discover to you the horror of sin, and the importance of renouncing it. You will find many : I advise you chiefly to make use of *Granada's Memorial* in the first part, (where he has an excellent preparation for a general confession) or the second volume of this work : read these, or any other which you have, with much attention, taking every time one or two chapters only, which you shall read often, and meditate attentively upon them, endeavouring to stir up, by what you read, a hatred for sin, a horror for having committed it, deploring your misery, and begging of God pardon for your offences, and grace to free yourself from them.

The day of your confession being come, after having begged of God the grace to perform well this action of so great importance, approach the sacrament with a profound respect, with a great recollection of mind, and with much sorrow of heart for having offended God. Accuse yourself of your sins humbly and plainly : after your accusation, protest before your confessor, that you abhor them from all your heart, and chiefly by reason of the infinite goodness of God, whom you have heinously offended ; that you humbly beg pardon, and are resolved to die rather than offend him any more ; entreating him that he will instruct you in the necessary remedies against sin, that you fall no more, and the means from thenceforward to live in virtue and the fear of God. This being done, hearken attentively to what he shall say, not thinking of any thing else. And when you shall be upon the point of receiving absolution, recollect yourself, and be humbled profoundly before God, renew all the sorrow you had for your sins, and implore his mercy, that he would absolve you in heaven at the same time that the priest absolves you by his authority upon earth.

O blessed day, *Theotime*, wherein you are freed from the state of sin, and power of the Devil, to be admitted into the number of the children of God, and for ever to serve him faithfully.

In order to make this confession profitable, be sure not quickly to forget it, as it happens to many, who afterwards scarce ever think of it, and so return to their former life. To prevent this, perform punctually what your director had ordained, as well in regard of doing penance for past sins, as in avoiding sin for the time to come. Remember to renew every morning the sorrow for having offended God, and the resolution you have made not to displease him any more upon any account whatsoever.

C H A P. VII.

Of ordinary confession.

THAT confession is not only a very profitable means, but absolutely necessary to keep men in the path of virtue, is a truth evinced by experience, which shews clearly that those who do not frequently practice this divine remedy, soon relapse into their first disorders, by falling into the sins they had forsaken. So that, *Theotime*, you must hold it for an undoubted maxim, that if you have a real design to live in virtue, you must frequently approach the sacrament of penance; if not, you will never be disengaged from vice, nor from the way of perdition; which I shall clearly demonstrate by the following reasons:

First, because although you may be some time without falling into mortal sin, nevertheless without frequent confession you may fall into a great number of venial sins, which being multiplied and neglected lead to mortal sin. *First reason.*

2. Without frequent confession you may be secretly engaged in wicked habits, which you will not believe to be such, and will be exposed to many dangerous occasions, against which you cannot guard yourself unless you be admonished. Now you cannot be admonished, but by often discovering your conscience to a discreet confessor, who will observe them, and warn you to avoid them. *Second reason.*

3. It is impossible that you should continue long without being assaulted by temptations, and particularly against chastity. Now it is impossible you should resist them without frequent confession. Do what you will, if you make not often use of this remedy, you will infallibly fall, as experience will convince you. He that neglects help, will fall into sickness, and from sickness into death. *Third reason.*

4. Confession, *Theotime*, is a remedy against sin: 1. Because it being a sacrament, it gives grace to resist it. 2. Because it makes us renew the detestation of sin, and the resolution not to commit any more. 3. Because the admonitions of the ghostly father in confession awake the penitent and encourage him anew to fly from sin, and to be faithful to God. 4. Because the penitent declaring his sins and temptations to his confessor, learns from him the means to resist them; even this only discovering of the temptations, is an effectual remedy to overcome them. The evil spirit fears nothing so much as to be discovered; he is a serpent which hides himself when he would bite, and flies away when he is perceived; he is a night-thief, who has no mind to appear in open day; he has no deeper stratagem for destroying young souls, than by keeping them silent in the affairs of their conscience, and hindering them from manifesting to any one the state of

of their souls, to the end, that in this pernicious silence they may find no help to resist temptations, nor means to withdraw themselves from their vices. "Sin (says S. Bernard) is soon cured when it is declared, but increases by silence; if one discover it, from great it becomes little; and if one conceal it, of little it becomes great*."

After these reasons I doubt not, dear *Theotime*, but that you are fully convinced of the necessity of confessing often: and since this is an affair of great consequence, and many faults are too often committed therein, I have much advice to give you, which I beseech you to read attentively, in order to put the same into practice.

C H A P. VIII.

Important advice concerning confession.

1. **C**ONFESS yourself at least once a month. If you have frequent temptations, you ought to confess oftner, and principally when you perceive the temptations beginning to assault you most strongly. Take notice of this, for it is of great importance, and for want of practising it, many unhappily relapse into sin.

2. Avoid the fault of many, who never think of confessing themselves, but when they have yielded to a temptation. It is a deplorable abuse, by which the devil unfortunately seduces many souls. For what a great folly is it, not to apply a remedy, till fallen into a mortal distemper, which might have been prevented if taken in time? According to the counsel of the wise man, *Before sickness take a medicine*†.

3. Beware of a still greater fault of those, who having been subdued by a temptation, instead of quickly raising themselves, and having recourse to the sacrament of penance, yield to all occasions, and neglect to confess themselves, whether through fear, remissness, or neglect of their salvation, until some great holiday obliges them, without which they would never think of employing the necessary remedy. This abuse is common amongst young persons, and the cause that many fall back after good resolutions, and frequently plunge themselves deeper into vice. We must not lose courage for having fallen, but raise ourselves immediately, and make use of that fall for our advantage, and stand more upon our guard against future relapses into sin.

4. Confess yourself to your ordinary confessor as often as you can; so that nevertheless if you find him not, you go to another, and let not his absence be the cause of your failing to confess yourself, when there is a reason for it.

5. Be assured that the Devil will use all his endeavours to hinder you from confessing often; he will oppose all obstacles imaginable: sometimes

* S. Bern. de interiori domo. cap. 37.

† Eccli. xviii. 20.

sometimes he will make you believe it too much trouble, sometimes that you are not sufficiently prepared, sometimes that you have no need; at another time he suggests, business interferes; oftentimes he will raise up some disgust against confession; at other times, and that very frequently, he will endeavour to withdraw you from it by a certain foolish shame, which he is accustomed to stir up in those of your age, by which he makes them blush at wholesome acts of piety. Nothing will be omitted to deter you from so profitable and necessary a means of salvation. But pass by all these hinderances, and look upon all those thoughts, which aim at withdrawing you from confession when requisite, as temptations of the Devil.

Now to confess well, endeavour to observe diligently that which follows.

1. Examine your conscience in the best manner that you can concerning the sins to which you are most inclined. *Means of making a good confession.*

2. After examination stir up in yourself a sorrow for having offended God, and beg pardon of him with all your heart.

3. Approach to confession with much respect and humility, representing to yourself that you are going to appear before God, as before a judge, to implore his mercy; and if you be obliged to wait, keep yourself in an humble and modest posture, praying or reading some good book.

4. Declare your sins humbly and plainly, making your confessor understand them clearly. There are some who confess but half their sins, and expect that the confessor should ask the rest; this is a great abuse, which frequently makes the confessions null, and sacrilegious.

5. Have a great care never to conceal a mortal sin in confession through shame or any other motive. That is a very heinous offence, which often happens to young persons, and particularly with regard to certain sins of impurity, which they are as harned to discover, through an unhappy bashfulness, which makes them frequently commit great sacrileges, and keeps in a continual state of mortal sin. O, *Theotime*, never fall into a disaster, by which the Devil seduces, and unhappily ruins many young persons.

6. Seek not by your confessions the esteem of your ghostly father, but to be healed of your sins, and directed by him in the way of salvation.

7. Having made your confession, give ear attentively to the admonitions of your ghostly father, and to the advice he shall give you, and do not imitate many, who think of nothing but calling to mind their sins, while the confessor speaks to them; have a care of this fault, for it is common, and makes one lose almost all the advantages of confession.

8. Before your ghostly father gives you absolution, and also whilst he shall pronounce it, beg pardon of God for your sins with much sorrow and regret for having committed them, with a firm resolution, by the assistance of his grace, to endeavour to amend. You must

deteft

detest mortal sins, as infinitely opposite to the goodness of God and your salvation ;* for other sins, you must be sorry because they are displeasing to God, and must always have a resolution to correct them in yourself as much as you can.

9. Perform your penance punctually and devoutly.

10. Accustom yourself on the day of your confession to reflect on the principal sins into which you have fallen : call to mind the advice your ghostly father gave you, and purpose to put it into practice.—See more on this subject in the second volume of this work.

C H A P. IX.

Of holy Communion.

OUR Saviour and Redeemer *Jesus Christ* had so great a desire of our sanctification and eternal happiness, that he was not satisfied with the institution of the sacrament of penance, wherein he left his power to his apostles of forgiving our sins, but by an incomprehensible excess of his love he has left us the most blessed sacrament of the eucharist, wherein he really gives himself for the nourishment of our souls, to preserve them in the life of grace, to cure them of their maladies, to strengthen them in their weaknesses, and conduct them happily unto life eternal.

From whence it follows, that the holy communion is a necessary means for those who aspire to virtue, and that those who have a true desire of their salvation, ought to make themselves worthy to approach frequently unto it. *Except you eat, says he himself, the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you* *.

It is from this living fountain, dear *Theotime*, you may draw abundant supplies of divine grace, and of all virtues necessary for you. You seek after wisdom, and here you receive the eternal wisdom in person. You desire purity, and here you receive purity itself. You want force to preserve virtue amidst the dangers of this life, and here you receive the author of all power, who can defend you against every thing that opposes your salvation.

Refuse not then the grace of your divine Saviour, who with such an admirable love gives himself to you. That person evidently shews he has no desire of salvation, who neglects to receive the very author of salvation.

Now as the fruit of communion depends upon communicating with requisite dispositions, the following are the admonitions you must observe in order to communicate well.

CHAP.

* John vi. 54.

C H A P. X.

Advice for communicating well.

PREPARE yourself in the best manner possible. *What is to be done to communicate the grace of preparing yourself to receive him well.* Beg of God, in your morning prayers, worthily. All the morning keep your mind much recollected, by reflecting upon the great action you are about to perform, and say often within yourself that which David said when he prepared to build a temple for God. *The work is great, for a house is prepared not for man, but for God**. It is Jesus Christ, *Theotime*, true God and true man, for whom you prepare a habitation in your soul; you must then prepare one worthy of him.

2. Be diligent in going to church to offer your prayers to God, and confess your sins; at which time ask of your confessor, whether he think it convenient you should communicate, and if he judge it fit, prepare yourself after this manner.

3. Take about half an hour before communion, to recollect your thoughts within yourself. *Preparation for communion.*

1. Humble yourself profoundly before our Lord Jesus Christ, acknowledging yourself unworthy to receive him; unworthy by reason of his greatness and sanctity, unworthy on account of your own sins. *Is it then to be thought* (said Solomon, having built his temple) *that God should indeed dwell upon earth†?* Say the same with regard to yourself. 2. Beg of him pardon for your sins, which make you unworthy to receive him. 3. Implore his grace to receive him worthily, that is with a pure conscience, with a lively faith, with a profound humility, with an ardent love of his goodness, and with an inviolable resolution to serve him all your life. If you know any prayers for communion, say them, but with attention and devotion: and also hear Mass.

The time of communion being come, leave your vocal prayers, approach modestly to the altar, with your eyes cast down, nor looking on one side nor the other, nor pressing to come first, but letting the crowd pass, if there be any. Being upon your knees, adore our Lord from the bottom of your heart; and after having said, *I confess, &c.* and *Lord, I am not worthy, &c.* with a true sentiment of your own unworthiness, with a firm faith, and most profound humility, receive the God of heaven, and the Saviour of your soul.

Being retired from the altar, say not presently vocal prayers in your book, but entertain yourself some time with your Saviour whom you enjoy within you. *After communion.* 1. Adore his immense greatness. 2. Admire his goodness, in coming to visit you, saying to him that which

* 1 Chron. xxix. 1. † 3 Kings viii. 27.

which St. Elizabeth said to the B. Virgin, *Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come**? Acknowledge that you are undeserving of that favour. 3. Ask pardon for your sins, and sorrow for having offended God, who gives himself to you with so much love and goodness. Protest to him that you will always love him, and never separate yourself from him again. 4. Represent to him the necessities of your soul, begging of him the graces you stand most in need of, to resist temptations, to avoid wicked company and occasions of offending God, and to correct all your evil habits. 5. Give him thanks for the favour he has done you, in giving himself to you; and in acknowledgment of his benefits, offer him your soul and its powers, your life, all that you have, and all you can do to love and serve him for ever. All this must be performed in a short time, but with much fervour. Return modestly from the church, and make all the rest of the day relish of this pious action.

You may read the Instruction for Communion we have joined to that of Penance.

C H A P. XI.

Of morning prayer.

*Ninth means,
morning prayer.*

CONFESSION and communion are very efficacious means of acquiring virtue, but they become unprofitable, or of little effect, unless accompanied with these which follow: Morning and evening prayer, assisting devoutly at the holy sacrifice of the altar, the good employment of time, the knowledge of one's self, reading good books, and pious conversations, are means so necessary for virtue that respiration and nourishment are not more needful for the support of the corporal life, than these things are necessary for the preservation of piety, which is the life of the soul.

I begin with morning prayer, which the wise man, amongst the means he assigns for obtaining wisdom, recommends early to you. *He will give his heart to resort early to the Lord, that made him, and he will pray in the sight of the Most High. He will open his mouth in prayer, and will make supplication for his sins*†.

I wish this excellent document were deeply engraven in the minds of men, and principally of young persons, as one of the most important for living virtuously. If you sincerely aspire to virtue, dear *Theotime*, you will punctually follow this instruction, which is one of the most necessary you can receive.

We owe to God all our actions, but chiefly the first in the morning; it is that, which is most agreeable to him, it is by that we consecrate the rest to him: by it we draw down the divine blessings upon

* Luc. i. 43. † Eccli. xxxix. 6, 7.

upon all our works, and collect the divine grace for the whole day ; as the *Israelites* in the desert gathered in the morning the manna of heaven which supported them all the day.

What is very remarkable in that manna, is, that those who failed to gather it in the morning found it not presently after, because it was melted at the rising of the sun, whereof the scripture gives this excellent reason, *viz.* that God who showered it down every morning, caused it to be dissolved with the first beams of the sun ; *That it might be known to all, that we must prevent the sun to bless thee, and adore thee at the dawning of the light* *.

But remember, *Theotime*, to perform this action in the manner the wise man prescribes ; for he would not have it a constrained, negligent and indevout prayer, but a prayer with the quite contrary qualities : he says, *The wise man will give his heart* (that is, will apply his will and affection) *to resort early to the Lord that made him* ; that is to say, will give his first thoughts to God, to adore him as his Creator, and thank him for all his benefits, *and he will pray in the sight of the Most High* ; that is, will consider the greatness of God, who is present, and to whom he speaks, and considering the infinite grandeur of the divine majesty will attentively offer his prayers to him with humility and great fervency and with a most profound respect, begging of God pardon for his sins, and ardently sighing after his holy grace.

To put in execution these instructions, practise what follows every morning as soon as you are up, cast yourself upon your knees in some retired place and there,

Practise.

1. Adore God from your heart, acknowledging him for your sovereign Lord and Creator, and looking upon him as one from whom you receive all that you have, or are.

2. Give him thanks for all the benefits you have received from him ; for the favour of your creation, of your redemption by the merits of his son *Jesus Christ*, of making you a Christian, a child of the Catholic Church, of instructing you in the necessary truths of salvation, and for other particular blessings.

3. Humbly implore his pardon for all the sins of your life past, by which you have so much offended his bounty, and abused his favours.

4. Beg of him the grace to employ that day in his service without offending him ; make a firm resolution not to consent to any mortal sin ; purpose to avoid the occasions, and endeavour to foresee those which may happen that day, to the end you may be armed against them.

5. Offer all the actions of the day to him, beseeching him that he would bless them, inspire you, and direct you in all your works, that you do nothing against his commandments ; nothing but through

through him, that is, by his grace ; and nothing but for him, that is, for his glory.

6. Recommend yourself to the Blessed Virgin, to your good angel, and to your patron. Perform all this in a short time, but with much fervour ; and be assured, *Thestime*, that if you be diligent in this exercise, you will find the truth of that saying of wisdom itself, *They that in the morning early watch for me shall find me* *.

C H A P. XII.

Of evening prayer.

Tenth means,
evening prayer.

IF it be a business of importance to begin the day well, it is of no less to finish it in the same manner. In the old law, God had not only commanded a sacrifice for every morning, but also for every evening ; to teach us, that as we ought to adore him in the beginning of the day, so we owe him our acknowledgment at the end of the day.

The advantages
of examen of consci-
ence at night.

The principal part of this action is the examen of conscience, which is a thing wherein you ought not to fail, if you seriously desire to advance in virtue. 1. It is a powerful means to cure ill habits, to avoid relapsing into sin, or readily to clear one's self of them. 2. It helps to discover the faults one has committed, in order to amend and avoid them, to continue a hatred of mortal sin, and a will not to commit it any more. 3. Without this exercise we fall into many offences, which being neglected lead us to mortal sin ; we are lulled asleep, when in sin, without a desire or thought of freeing ourselves. 4. By this exercise, ordinary confessions are made more easy and frequent, we amend our lives, we prevent an unprovided death, we prepare ourselves for judgment by judging ourselves. And it is in this action that we excellently well practise that admirable advice of the wise man ; *Before judgment examine thyself, and thou shalt find mercy in the sight of God* †.

Be careful then, *Thestime*, to perform daily this important exercise in the following manner :

At night being upon your knees before you go to bed,

1. Adore God, and give him thanks for all his favours, particularly for preserving you that day from misfortunes which might have befallen you.

2. Beg of him grace to discover the sins you have committed that day, in order to ask pardon for them and to amend your life.

3. Examine your conscience concerning the sins to which you are most subject. For this effect, call to mind your chief actions from morning

* Prov. viii. 17. † Eccli. xviii. 20.

morning to night, and take notice of the faults you have committed. Recollect whether you have had any temptations that day; examine how you have behaved, whether you have readily resisted them, or with negligence. Take notice of what company you have been in, and whether you have done any thing indecently, either by giving bad example, in word or deed, either in yourself or others; for example, either through persuasion, fear of displeasing or being despised; or in a word, by not preventing the sin of another when in your power. Consider whether you have employed well your time all that day, or unprofitably lost it; and so of the rest.

4. After discovering the sins you have committed, stir up in yourself a sorrow for them, humbly beg pardon of God, make a resolution to amend the day following, and remember to confess them the first opportunity.

If unhappily amongst these sins there should be any that were mortal, rise not up from your prayers till you have abundantly deplored your misery, and conceived an extreme regret for having so grievously offended so holy and adorable a God. Beg of him pardon with all the contrition of your heart, and protest that you will confess it as soon as possible.

Beg of him that you may not die in that wretched state. Alas! dear *Theotime*, is it possible a soul can sleep without fear and dread, whilst under the weight of mortal sin! If you have no such dread, you ought to look upon such an insensibility with horror, as a snare by which the Devil endeavours to ruin you for ever.

5. Recommend to God your soul and body; beseech him that he will preserve you from all misfortunes that night, and principally from sin. Offer your prayers to the Blessed Virgin, your angel-guardian, your patron, and all the saints together.

And as at the beginning of the day you begged of God the grace to live well, so at the end remember to beg of him the grace to die well. The end we make of every day, is emblematical of the end we shall one day make of our lives. Finish therefore every day as you would one day finish your life.

An important advice.

C H A P. XIII.

Of assisting devoutly at the holy sacrifice of the altar.

THE most holy and adorable sacrifice of the Mass is the greatest of all mysteries, and the supreme act of our religion: it is a sacrifice which our Saviour *Jesus Christ* has instituted, wherein by the real oblation of his body and blood, 1. We give to God the greatest honour he can receive;

Eleventh means.

receive ; 3. We worthily return him thanks for his benefits ; 3. We render him propitious in pardoning our offences ; 4. We obtain his grace and favour. What the ancient law did by four kinds of sacrifices, we perform in a more perfect manner, by this alone, which is altogether *latreutic*, that is, honouring God ; *eucharistic*, that is, giving thanks to God ; *propitiatory* and *impetratory*.

They who are present at this holy sacrifice partake of these four effects, and receive great advantages thereby, provided they assist at it as they ought.

To assist at it as we ought, three things are necessary, *attention*, *respect*, and *devotion*. *Attention*, to have the mind present, and attentive to the divine action. *Respect*, to be present with a great modesty as to the exterior, and a profound reverence of the soul at this adorable sacrifice, at which the angels themselves assist with fear and trembling. *Devotion*, not to hear it negligently and by custom, as many times we do, but with a design to partake of the four effects of this sacrifice, *viz.* to pay to God the adoration due to him ; to give him thanks for his favours ; to implore his mercy for our sins ; to petition for favours especially that of converting ourselves entirely to him, and of living for ever in his service.

Endeavour then, *Theotime*, to be present daily, if you can, at this solemn sacrifice ; but always with these three dispositions. There are many different ways of assisting devoutly at this holy sacrifice ; but provided you be present with these three conditions, and perform therein those four things afore-mentioned, adoring God profoundly, begging pardon of him, rendering him thanks for his favours, and imploring his grace for yourself and others ; this is the most profitable method you can follow.

These four things ought to be performed principally from the *consecration*, till the *communion* ; as for the time before *consecration*, you may employ it in reciting some prayers, or, if you be capable in accompanying the priest in all he shall say or do in every part of the sacrifice : that is, in begging pardon of God with him during the *Introit*, and *Kyrie eleison* ; joining with him during the *prayers* ; hearkening attentively to the *epistle* and *gospel*, representing to yourself *Jesus Christ* who speaks to you, endeavouring to keep in your memory what instruction you receive from his holy word ; at the *credo*, making a profession of faith with the priest ; at the *offertory*, offering with him ; at the *preface*, when he says *sursum corda*, raising your heart to God to keep you more attentive, and disposing yourself to adore our Saviour at the *consecration*, and performing the four things we have spoken of.

C H A P. XIV.

Of labour and employment of time.

IT is not sufficient to begin well, and piously *Tweeth means.* End the day in the manner we have said; we must also employ it profitably in some virtuous labour, there being nothing so contrary to virtue, or so favourable to vice, as idleness, principally in young persons, as we shall shew you hereafter * Wherefore, *Theetime*, if you sincerely desire to live virtuously, you must add this means to the former, and be persuaded that, to cultivate virtue, it is absolutely necessary for you to fly idleness, and to be exact in the employments of your condition.

Hear me, my son, says the wise man, and despise me not, and in the end thou shalt find my words. In all thy works be quick, and no infirmity shall come to thee. (He speaks of the infirmities both of soul and body †.) Idleness weakens the body by the want of exercise, and the ill humours it gathers. But it brings many, and those far more dangerous to the soul, by making it susceptible of every vice; for as exercise is necessary for the health of the body, so employment and labour are needful for the health of the soul: for it is impossible to preserve it without that help.

Employ yourself diligently every day in the labour of that condition wherein God has placed you: look *Practice.* not upon it, as a thing troublesome or tedious, but as an exercise appointed by God to employ you therein faithfully, and as a necessary means of your salvation, to avoid idleness, the mother of all vices, and the cause of the ruin of youth. Offer it to God every morning, and when you begin beseech him that he would give a blessing to it, and that it may succeed to his glory and your salvation.

Now if this advice be necessary in all the different conditions of men, it is most of all necessary in the profession of students. If you are called thereto, you ought to employ yourself therein more faithfully than in any other condition, not only because God has placed you in it as a means to avoid idleness; but also because, if you be negligent in this state, you lose the time proper to learn in, viz. that of youth, which you can never repair: you lose the opportunity of rendering yourself fit for any employment, as we see it daily happens to many, who having lost their time during their studies, continue slothful and unprofitable all the rest of their life, and many times becomes vicious and wicked. ¶, *Theetime*, you ought to make a scruple of losing this so precious a time: you shall give an exact account thereof at the judgment of God. *If any man know not, he shall not be known* ‡. And, *He that refuseth to learn, shall fall into evils* §.

CHAP.

* Part III. Chap. VII. † Eccli. xxxi. 26. 127. ‡ 1 Cor. xiv. 38. § Prov. xvii. 16.

C H A P. XV.

Of the knowledge of one's self, very necessary for young people.

Thirteenth means.

AMONGST all the means which conduce to virtue, the knowledge of one's self is one of the most important ; and it is so necessary, that it is impossible to attain to virtue without it. For this reason it has always been so much recommended by authors who have given rules for a Christian life ; the Pagans themselves have always had it in much esteem, having received as an instruction come from heaven, these two words, which were written upon the gates of the temple of *Apollo* at *Delphos*, γνῶθι σεαυτὸν, *Know thyself*.

By this knowledge is to be understood a serious and frequent reflection on the inclinations of the soul, the passions which rule there, the vices which spring up or encrease, that they may be corrected with proper remedies according as they are discovered.

This knowledge is necessary for all men, and for want of exercising themselves therein, the greatest part of them remain all their lives subject to many vices. But it is chiefly necessary for young persons, because they are in an age wherein their passions begin to spring up and gather strength, if not corrected and restrained : wherefore it is highly necessary to observe them and stop them, for two reasons.

1. They are more easy to be cured in their beginning, and stifled in their birth, than corrected when they are become stronger.

2. "The Devil," as *S. Ambrose* very judiciously remarks, "tempts men most violent at that time, when he sees some passions arising in their soul ; for it is then, that he excites most of all the causes, and lays ambushes to engage them more therein *."

For these reasons, dear *Theotime*, I exhort you to this knowledge of yourself, as a thing which is infinitely necessary, and will be of great service ; or to say better, it is not I who recommend this measure, it is the Holy Ghost himself, in that excellent instruction in the thirty-seventh chapter of *Ecclesiasticus*, by the mouth of the wise man ; *Son, prove thy soul in thy life : and if it be wicked give it no power †*. He gives the reason in another place : *A wicked soul shall destroy him that has it ‡*. And in the eighteenth chapter he gives us to understand what it is, *Not to give liberty to our soul, viz. not to follow her motions and depraved inclinations, but carefully to repress them. Go not, says he, after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will ; this is to be understood when it is evil. If thou give to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies §*.

We must therefore know in our youth the inclinations of our souls ; that we may repress them when they are wicked. It is the first

* *Am br. lib. i Offic. c. 4.* † *Eccli. xxxvii. 30.* ‡ *Eccli. vi. 4.* § *Eccli. xviii. 30, 31.*

first knowledge we must learn, and to which we must in good time apply ourselves that we may practise it all our life. It is the science of sciences, without which all others are of no advantage: for what does it profit us to know all other things, and to be ignorant of ourselves? "Begin your study with the knowledge of yourself, (says S. Bernard *) it is in vain to extend your knowledge to things which belong not to you, neglecting yourself. What doth it avail if you gain the whole world, and lose your own soul? Whatever wisdom you possess, if it be not so for yourself, the greatest part of knowledge is wanting. Although you should know all the highest mysteries of faith, and all the secrets included in nature, if you know not yourself, you are like to him who builds without a foundation, preparing a ruin rather than an edifice." And it befalls them who neglect this knowledge of themselves, as it did that philosopher, who being attentive to the consideration of the stars, fell into a deep ditch for want of looking to himself, and became the object of laughter to the spectators.

Be careful then, dear *Theotime*, to exercise yourself in the knowledge of yourself, and in moderating your affections: learn in time that you must not follow all the motions and inclinations of your heart, but that there are many which you must resist with all your power by the grace of God. To attain to this knowledge and moderation.

1. Accustom yourself to make reflection upon yourself, to observe your inclinations, and the vices to which you are subject; you will discover some passion or vice, which over-rules; either pride, anger, love of pleasures, or the like. You will discover others which will spring up from time to time, and which will encrease unless you carefully repress them. Sometimes it will be an unwillingness to learn, and disobedience; sometimes sloth; often impurity: sometimes lying and deceit; sometimes cursing and swearing; at other times discord and revenge; and so of others. When you shall discover them, permit them not to grow up.

"Principiis obsta: sero medicina paratur,

"Cum mala per longas invaluere moras."

"The motion unto ill at first withstand:

"The cure's too late, when vice hath got command."

Endeavour quickly to apply the remedies. In the third and fourth part of this work you will find them for every one of these vices.

2. Since we cannot oftentimes gain a competent knowledge of ourselves, especially in our youth, seek to be admonished of your wicked and dangerous inclinations, by those who know you; as your masters, and particularly your ghostly father. Readily give ear to what he shall tell you, and labour to correct yourself.

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3. Above

* Lib. 2. de Consideratione cap. 3.

3. Above all, be diligent in begging of God frequently the grace to know yourself, and to reform the evil which is in you. *O my God enlighten my darkness* *, that I may know all that is in me displeasing to thy divine majesty, and that I may amend it by thy grace ! Offer frequently to him that excellent prayer of St. *Augustine*, “ Lord give me grace to know thee : Lord give me grace “ to know myself.” This, *Theotime*, is the two-fold knowledge which alone is necessary, that of yourself, and that of God. The first produces humility and amendment, which is the beginning of virtue. The second produces charity and the love of God, which is the height of perfection.

C H A P. XVI.

Of the reading of pious books.

Fourteenth means, reading good books.

THE wise man will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients, and will be occupied in the prophets †, that is, in reading of the holy things. It is another means which the wise man assigns you as very necessary, and useful for acquiring and preserving virtue.

We only become learned by the study of science ; in like manner we only become virtuous by our application to virtue. We have shewn above, that instruction is necessary to learn virtue ; now we receive not instructions from masters only, but also by reading books. We are not always near our pastors and directors to learn from them the way of virtue. Their instructions, their admonitions, their exhortations, their counsels, continue but for a time in our memory ; we easily forget them if they be not maintained and renewed by the reading of books, and meditation upon holy things.

For this reason the wise man in *Ecclesiasticus* ‡, after he had said, that to acquire wisdom we must hearken to the documents of the wise, adds this other mean as necessary, *viz.* that we must study and meditate upon the law of God. *Let thy thoughts*, says he, *be upon the precepts of God, and meditate continually on his commandments* §.

Charity, *Theotime*, is a fire which must necessarily be kept up by good thoughts and pious actions : if this nourishment be taken away, she becomes weak, and at length entirely extinguished ; if that fail not, she is enflamed, and daily encreases. Now the source of these thoughts and affections is the reading of pious books, which serves as an instrument of divine grace to inspire us with them.

Example. It was by this that God wrought that wonderful conversion of St. *Augustine*, which was begun by the reading of a book called *Hortensius*,

* Psalm xvii. 29.

† Eccli. xxxix. 1.

‡ Chap. vi.

§ Eccli. vi. 37.

sius, treating of wisdom, as he himself relates in third book of his confessions*, it was forwarded by an account of the conversion of two courtiers, reclaimed by reading the life of St. *Antony*, and was at last perfected by reading the New Testament, which a voice from heaven commanded him to read, saying, *Take and read*.

By this was wrought that wonderful change of S. *Serapion*, whom the reading of the gospel moved so strongly, that he left all his goods, and having given them to the poor, even to his wearing apparel, he went through the streets with a New Testament under his arm, saying *behold what has stript me*. O the great force of pious reading! How is it possible that so holy and powerful a means for the conversion of souls, should be so much neglected!

But it is not sufficient to read good books, *A profitable way*
we must read to profit by them; for this end *of reading*.
observe in your reading these following conditions:

1. Read not for curiosity, and only to please the mind, but out of a desire to learn how to live well; and to make your reading the more profitable, remember to begin it in general with raising up your mind to God†, in order to beg of him the grace to learn something for your instruction.

2. Read with great respect, considering that it is God who speaks to you in your book. It is a consideration of the holy fathers, who say, when we pray, we speak to God; and when we read, he talks to us.

3. Read not many books, but only two or three well chosen, which may be proper to stir you up to virtue, and which may afford you the means: As S. *Austin's confessions*, *The imitation of Christ*, the *Introduction to a devout life*, the *Sinners guide*, composed by *Granada*, or some other, according to the advice of your confessor.

4. Read in order, that is, beginning at the beginning, and continuing until the end, otherwise your reading will be to little use.

5. Read but little at a time, and that slowly and attentively; make reflection upon the things you read; endeavour to draw some good resolution from thence, and beg of God the grace to put it in execution.

6. Read often, that is, either every day, or at least from time to time in the week, chiefly upon Sundays and feasts.

7. Content not yourself with having read a book once over, but peruse it often. If you read it not out of curiosity, but to learn virtue, you will find the second reading more profitable than the first; you will the more easily become master of your book, you will retain it better, and reduce it more into practice.

Observe, *Theotime*, what has been here said, and carefully put it in practice. It is too plainly seen how little profit young persons receive from good books they read ill, without concern, or reflexion;

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which

* Chap. iv. † Psalm cxviii. 73.

which shows how little they desire to advance in the way of virtue; as on the contrary a relish for good books denotes a progress in piety.

C H A P XVII.

Advice against bad books.

WHEN I exhort you to read good books, I advise you at the same time entirely to refrain from bad ones, so destructive to morals, there is nothing more pernicious to youth.

It is one of the most effectual means the devil had invented to corrupt our minds, and which generally succeeds. He has raised up an infinite number of all sorts, in all languages, at all times, and still devises new ones. The greatest part are disguised under the appearance of learning or eloquence, or of some ingenious invention; and are by so much more dangerous, as under these disguises they conceal a mortal poison, which is deeply imbibed in the soul. Young persons read them with pleasure and eagerness, and easily remember them: discourses are forgotten, but books still remain in their hands, which they have time to give attention to, and swallow down by degrees their deadly poison.

Such books are always pernicious and destructive; for some produce in their minds doubts and errors; others pervert the judgment, corrupt good inclinations, making that which appear good which is evil, and that evil which is good; others teach vice, raise our passions, enflame concupiscence, and kindle dishonest love in the hearts of the most chaste; there are none which leave not behind them much cause to repent the reading of them.

These books are pernicious to all, but most hurtful to young persons, who are more apt to receive their ill impressions through the tenderness of their minds and the inclinations they too often have for ill. Youth ought therefore to avoid them as the productions of the Devil, and as a detestable poison, which hell vomits upon earth to infect and destroy souls.

1. Such are all heretical books, which teach errors in faith, and which attack the truths received by the church.

2. All impious books, which turn religion and holy things into derision; which censure the ceremonies, and received customs thereof; or which scoff at persons consecrated to God, as priests and religious: such also as abuse the sacred scripture by wicked and profane applications.

3. Lascivious and immodest books, which wage open war against chastity.

4. Books which treat of love, although they be not openly lewd, such as most of the poets, and the greatest part of romances. These books

books are more dangerous than those of the third sort, because these openly teach wickedness, and easily create an aversion to themselves in souls which have yet some shame and conscience; but these not seeming to be directly bad, attract the mind by their fair discourses, and by the agreeableness of the subject, delighting the senses, enflame the heart with impure love.

Avoid all these books, *Theotime*, as inventions which the Devil has found out to destroy you. You can scarce ever read them without a mortal sin; for you either entertain evil thoughts, (a voluntary consent and delight in which is criminal in the sight of God) or expose yourself to the evident danger of entertaining them. If you have any of these books, keep them not, part with them not, notwithstanding any resolution you have made not to read them. Curiosity will tempt you, and overcome you at the end; it is a serpent, which when you think the least on it, will give you a mortal wound.

Say not that these books are well composed, that the discourse is eloquent, that you learn there to speak well, and many excellent things: for I shall answer you with St. *Augustine*, "That all this is but a false pretext, by which you deceive yourself; and that by these wicked books we learn not to speak well, but only to become bad, and commit vice with less restraint*." I tell you, you may draw purer eloquence from other places than from those corrupted fountains; and that eloquence or science is fatal, which cannot be acquired but with the loss of one's soul and eternal happiness.

C H A P. XVIII.

Of pious conversation.

THERE is yet a most important means to acquire virtue, *viz.* to converse with virtuous persons. Nothing has so great power over the mind as example, whether good or bad. Man is naturally inclined to imitation, and to act that which he sees others do. Now if example has such an influence over the mind, it is principally in conversation, where it has so much more force, as it is nearer and more frequent. And if it has so much power over men, it has a wonderful influence upon young people, as we see by experience.

For this reason one of the most important advices which can be given to those who aspire to virtue, and particularly to young persons, is that of pious conversation.

It is there, *Theotime*, virtue is instilled into the mind with pleasure. The example of others makes secret, but strong impressions, which move the soul to imitation. A man insensibly embraces their judgments and maxims, learns to speak and act like them, and believes

* S. Aug. lib. 2. confess. cap. 16.

believes it his duty to do what he sees other perform. A noble spirit blushes to see itself overcome by its companions: and it is a sign of a wicked disposition, and of a mind totally abandoned by God, when the example of others makes no impression, but persists in vice amidst patterns of virtue.

This most powerful means is also taught by the wise man in *Ecclesiasticus**, *Treat*, says he, *with the wise and prudent. Let just men be guests*†. The reason of this counsel is given in the *Proverbs*; because *he that walked with the wise, shall be wise*‡.

Now there are two sorts of virtuous persons with whom you ought to converse.

1. Endeavour to associate yourself with discreet persons, who surpass you in age as well as in wisdom and virtue. It is the advice of the wise man in the words I quoted above, and also in chap. vi. where he says, *Stand in the multitude of ancients that are wise, and join thyself from thy heart to their wisdom*§; that is, take pleasure in their society, and avail yourself of their wise discourses and good examples. S. Ambrose gives the same advice to young people in his offices¶, where he says, "That it is very profitable for young persons to follow wise men, because it helps them much to learn virtue, and give some proof of their integrity. And that young persons, conversing with wise men, shew, that they imitate those with whom they associate; and it is judged that they form their lives according to theirs with whom they keep company."

2. converse with those of your age and profession, whom you know to be addicted to virtue: their example will make great impression upon your mind, and will sweetly draw you to imitate them: make a good choice, practising exactly that excellent advice of S. Jerom to Nepotian; "Associate, says he, yourself with those whose conversation may give no blemish to your reputation, who are better adorned with virtue than with garments, and who delight not in curling their hair, but who carry modesty in their behaviour." Keep company with such, love their conversation, often take notice of their modesty, of their piety, of their virtuous actions, and endeavour to imitate them by a holy and blessed emulation, which will not permit you to be last in the service of your creator.

C H A P. XIX.

Of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and S. Joseph.

Sixteenth means. ONE of the last means which I assign, but also one of the most effectual, for acquiring virtue in youth, is, devotion to the Blessed Virgin

* Chap. ix. † Eccli. ix. 21, 22. ‡ Prov. xiii. 20. § Eccli. vi. 35. ¶ Lib. 2

Virgin. It is infallible to such who assiduously employ it, because it affords at the same time the most powerful intercession in the sight of God for obtaining his favour, and the most perfect model for our imitation.

Next to God, and the most adorable humanity of his Son *Jesus Christ*, it is she whom we must chiefly honour and love, by reason of that most sublime and excellent dignity of mother of God, which raises her above all creatures that God has ever created.

By her we may receive all the assistance which is necessary for us. She is most powerful with God, to obtain from him all that she shall ask of him. She is all goodness in regard of us, by applying to God, for us. Being mother of God, he will not refuse her request; being our mother, she will not deny us her intercession when we have recourse to her. Our miseries move her, our necessities urge her; the prayers we offer her for our salvation bring to us all that we desire: and *S. Bernard* is not afraid to say*, "That never any person invoked that mother of mercy in his necessities, who has not been sensible of the effects of her assistance."

Although the Blessed Virgin extends her goodness to all men, yet we may say she has a particular regard for young people, whose frailty she knows to be the greatest, and necessities most urgent, especially for the preservation of chastity, which is most assaulted in that age, and of which she is a singular protectress. History is full of examples of saints, who have preserved this great virtue in their youth, by the assistance of this Queen of Virgins; and experience affords daily examples of those who have gained great victories, by the recourse they have had to her intercession, and who have happily advanced themselves in virtue under her protection, and by the graces she obtains of God for them.

Be therefore devout to the Blessed Virgin, dear *Theotime*; but let it not be the devotion of many, who think themselves so, in offering some prayer to her, more by custom than devotion; and on the other side exceedingly displease her by a life full of mortal sin, which they commit without remorse. What devotion is this, to desire to please the mother, and daily crucify the son, trampling his blood under their feet, and contemning his grace and favour? Is not this to be an enemy both to son and mother.

O, dear *Theotime*, your devotion to the Blessed Virgin must not be like that, for it must be religious, and it must be holy; and to speak plainly, if you will be a true child, and a sincere servant of the Blessed Virgin, you must be careful to perform four things.

1. Have a great apprehension of displeasing her by mortal sin, and of afflicting her motherly heart by dishonouring her son, and destroying your soul; and if you should fall into that misfortune, have recourse instantly to her, that she may be your intercessor in reconciling you to her son, whom you have extremely provoked. "She is the

"refuge

* Serm. 4. de Assumpt.

“refuge of sinners as well as of the just, on condition they have
 “recourse to her with a true desire of converting themselves, as St.
 “*Bernard* says *.”

2. Love and imitate her virtues, principally her humility and chastity. These two virtues among others rendered her most pleasing to God; she loves them particularly in children, and is pleased to assist with her prayers those whom she finds particularly inclined to those virtues, according to the same saint. *Ibid.*

3. Have recourse to her in all your spiritual necessities: and for that end offer to her daily some particular prayers, say your beads, or the little office sometimes in the week, perform something in her honour on every *Saturday*, whether prayer, abstinence, or alms; honour particularly her feasts by confession and communion.

4. Be mindful to invoke her in temptations, and in the dangers you find yourself in of offending God. You cannot shew your respect better, than by applying yourself to her in these urgent necessities, and you can find no succour more ready and favourable than hers. It is the counsel of St. *Bernard*; “If the winds of temptations be raised against you, if you run upon the rocks of adversity, lift up your eyes towards that star, invoke the Blessed Virgin. In dangers, in extremities, in doubtful affairs, think upon the Blessed Virgin, let her not depart from your mouth, nor from your heart; and that you may obtain the assistance of her intercession, be sure to follow her example.†”

If you perform this you will have a true devotion to the Blessed Virgin, you will be of the number of her real children, and she will be your mother, under whose protection you shall never perish. Remember well that excellent sentence of *S. Anselm*, who presumed to say, “That as he must unavoidably perish who has no affection to the Blessed Virgin *Mary*, and who forsakes her; so it is impossible he should perish who has recourse to her, and whom she regards with the eyes of mercy.”

A remarkable example. I shall conclude with an excellent example which I shall produce as a proof of this truth ‡. St. *Birgit* had a son who followed the profession of a foldier, and died in the wars, Hearing the news of his death, she was much concerned for the salvation of her son, dead in so dangerous a condition; and as she was often favoured by God with revelations, of which she has composed a book, she was assured of the salvation of her son by two subsequent revelations. In the first, the Blessed Virgin revealed to her, that she had assisted her son with a particular protection at the hour of death, having strengthened him against temptations, and obtained all necessary graces for him to make a holy and happy end. In the following, she declared the cause of that singular assistance she gave her son, and said, it was in

* Serm. 1. super Salve Regina.
 † Revel. of S. *Birgit*. cap. 13.

‡ St. Bern. Hom. 2, super Missus est.

in recompense of his great and sincere devotion he had testified to her during his life, wherein he had loved her with a very ardent affection, and had endeavoured to please her in all things.

This, *Theotime*, is what real devotion to the Blessed Virgin did merit for this young man, and for many others: she will be as powerful in your behalf, if you have a devotion to her, if you love and honour the blessed Virgin in the manner we have mentioned.

But in speaking of the devotion to the Blessed Virgin *Mary*, I cannot pass by her blessed spouse, the glorious St. *Joseph*. This great saint having had the singular happiness of being chosen to have the care and guardianship of

Devotion to Saint Joseph very profitable to young persons.

the Son of God in his infancy and youth, it must needs follow that he will be favourable to young persons, and cherish them tenderly in that age, which he saw sanctified by the Son of God. He served him in all the necessities of life, to which he was pleased to submit himself for our love: he freed him from the persecutions of his enemies; he bred him up in his infancy, governed him in his youth; he saw him submit to his commands; he was a continual witness and admirer of the graces and virtues appearing from day to day in his tender years, as the sun discovers its light as it rises higher.

Ought we not to believe that this saint, who had so much familiarity with *Jesus Christ* when a child, loves with a singular tenderness the children of *Jesus Christ*, and particularly those who endeavour to conform themselves to that divine youth by the imitation of his virtues, and that he will be their protector and intercessor before *Jesus Christ*.

Fix your affection, *Theotime*, upon this great saint, and honour him with a particular respect: take him for your patron, and for the protector of your purity. Pray to him daily with much confidence, and above all in your necessities, and you will receive wonderful help. Ask of him, by the care he had of the divine infancy of *Jesus Christ*, that he would preserve your youth from the dangers of your salvation; and that he would aid you to retain in your soul that divine Saviour, as he was employed in taking care of him whilst he was in the world.

C H A P. XX.

Of devotion to our angel-guardian, and to the saint of one's name.

GOD loves us with such tenderness that he gives to every one of us an angel for our guardian, employing by an incomparable goodness his most perfect creatures in our service, even those celestial spirits which are created incessantly to contemplate him, and continually to serve him

Seventeenth means.

in

in heaven. O, *Theotime*, how great is the bounty of God, to depute no less than a prince of his court for the conduct of a poor servant! and, as St. *Bernard* says excellently well * “not to be content to send his Son to us, to give us his Holy Spirit, to promise the enjoyment of himself in heaven; but to the end there should be nothing in heaven unemployed for our salvation, he sends his angels to contribute thereto their service; he appoints them our guardians, he commands them to be our protectors and guides.”

Entertain particular love and honour for him to whom God has entrusted you. He is always near to conduct and guard you; he inspires you with good thoughts; he assists you in important affairs; he fortifies you in temptations; he diverts many misfortunes which otherwise would befall you, whether temporal or spiritual; and he continues these good offices in proportion as you have recourse to him. What is it that you owe not to such a director and guardian.

St. *Bernard* says, “that the being guarded by our good angel ought to inspire us with three things, *respect*, *love*, and *confidence*. Respect for his presence, love or devotion for the good-will he has for us, and confidence for the care he has of our preservation.”

1. Shew then, *Theotime*, a great respect to your angel; and, when you are tempted to any wicked action, call to mind his presence, and be ashamed to do that before him, which you would not dare to commit before a virtuous person.

2. Love him tenderly, and recommend yourself to him daily. Beseech him that he would direct your actions, and protect you from the misfortunes of this life, and above all from sin, which is the greatest of all evils.

3. Remember to have recourse to him in all your necessities, and principally on two occasions:

The first is, when you deliberate or undertake any important affair, wherein you have need of counsel and assistance. Entreat your good angel to conduct you in that affair, so that you undertake it not, except it be according to the will of God, for his service and your salvation, and to assist you in bringing it to a happy issue. This means is very efficacious to make your affairs succeed; it is impossible they should not prosper under so good a guide, who is most faithful, wise, and powerful.

The second is, when you are assaulted with any temptation, and in danger of offending God. “As often as any tribulation or violent temptation assails you, (says St. *Bernard* †) implore your guardian, your leader, your assistant in tribulation” This remedy, *Theotime*, is very powerful in all temptations, and especially in those against chastity, of which the angels are lovers, and particular protectors, as being a virtue which renders men like to themselves, and which makes them imitate upon earth their most pure and celestial

* Serm. 12. in Psal. qui habitat. † Serm. 12. in Psal. in Qui habitat.

celestial life. "From whence" says St. *Ambrose* *, "it is no wonder
" if angels defend chaste souls, who lead upon earth a life of angels."

Next to your good angel, honour particularly
your patron. The names of saints are given *Devotion to our*
us at baptism, that they may be our protectors. *patron.*
and intercessors with God, and that by their
prayers, and the example of their virtues, we may acquit ourselves
worthily of the obligation of a Christian life, whereof we make pro-
fession in baptism. "Honour and love him whose name you bear,
" recommend yourself daily to him; but to obtain his assistance,
" remember to imitate his virtues †."

C H A P. XXI.

Of keeping festivals, and particularly Sundays.

THE celebration of festivals is also an efficacious means of ac-
quiring virtue, when it is well observed according to the
command of God and the church. These are
the days appointed for men to attend the service *The primitive in-*
of God, and the sanctifications of their souls. *stitution of festi-*
These days being well employed cause men to *vals.*
make a speedy progress in the way of salvation.

The institution of holy days is as ancient as the world, at the
beginning whereof the scripture says, that God having created all
things in six days, gave his blessing to the seventh, and sanctified
it in memory of the accomplishment of his works ‡. He prescribed
the manner how he would be honoured on that day §. He added
also other days, which he would have employed in acknowledgment
of his most signal benefits, and for the sanctification of his people.

This institution has been continued, augmented and perfected in
the new law. Continued by the sanctification of the seventh day,
except only it was transferred to the next day after the sabbath of
the *Jews* ||, the day of the resurrection of our Lord, of the coming of
the Holy Ghost, and of many other mysteries of our redemption,
and the favours God has bestowed upon the Blessed Virgin and the
saints. Perfected as to the manner of celebrating them, which is
far more elevated, more spiritual, and more perfect than in the old
law, which as the apostle says, *brought nothing to perfection ¶*.

This perfection does not consist in material
sacrifices, as in that law, nor in a bare refrain-
ing from corporal and servile works, as the *In what the sanc-*
generality of Christians seem to esteem it; but *tification of feasts con-*
it requires an interior and spiritual worship, which is performed by *sists.*
hearing

* Hom. 3. de Virginitate. † S. Aug. Serm. 39. ‡ Gen. ii. § Levit. xxiii.
¶ S. Leo, Epist. 81. ¶¶ Heb. vii. 19.

hearing of Mass, praising God, thanksgivings, prayers, contrition, reading pious books, and other like good actions, which are the sacrifices God expects from us on these days.

"The observance of the Christian sabbath consists, as *Origen* says very well, in quitting all temporal concerns, to apply ourselves to those of our salvation; to go to church, to hear the divine word, to think upon heaven, to aspire to glory, to call to mind the last judgment; forgetting things present, to employ our thoughts upon those which are eternal *."

An observance which not only celebrates a festival upon earth, but in heaven to the angels, who rejoice; and to God himself, "to whom," as the same author says, "the salvation of men is a great feast."

Such a keeping of holy days as this, is a great means of acquiring and visibly improving virtue, for which end it is principally commanded. Wherefore I admonish you here, *Theotime*, to acquit yourself worthily thereof; and not permit yourself to be carried away by the example of many, who profane these holy days by sinful actions. Some spend them in temporal employments and affairs, without respect or distinction as the most profane. Others pass them in idleness, and vain amusements, as if feasts were appointed for nothing else but dissipation, not considering that if it be commanded to rest from corporal works on these days, it is to apply the mind to pious things; "and that to keep the feast in that idle manner, is to observe it carnally, as *S. Augustine* says †," and after the manner of the *Jews*, who violate the repose of holy days by committing evil, and who would be less culpable, in tilling the earth all the day, than in spending it in merriments. Others employ themselves on *Sundays* in sinful actions, as in debauchery, in drunkenness, in immodest discourse, in quarrels, in fighting and gaming, and other like discourses, which change the feasts of God into the solemnities of the Devil, and afford a subject of joy ‡ to those wicked spirits, as they are the object § of abomination to God, according to the testimony of the sacred scripture.

Be not therefore of the number of those who abuse so holy and necessary an institution; but spend your time religiously upon holidays in the service of God, and the sanctification of your soul, according to the command of God and his church.

The first thing that ought to be done on Sundays. 1. Because the greatest hinderance to the sanctification of feasts is sin, offend not God on those days; for although sin ought at all times to cause a horror, yet it is then more criminal. "He who sins, (says *Origen*.) celebrates a feast of sin, and not a holy day of God ||." If the fault of him who gathered a few sticks upon the

* *Origenes* hom. 23. in *Numeros*. † *Psal.* xxxii. ‡ *Lam.* i. § *Isaiah* i. || *Ibid.* *Orig.* *Num.* 15.

the sabbath was judged so great, that he deserved to be stoned to death by the commandment of God himself; what crime will it be to violate the sanctity of a *Sunday* with a mortal sin? If a servile work, which is not bad in itself, be esteemed contrary to the holiness of a sabbath, how much more a sin, which infinitely dishonours God, which profanes the sanctity of his living temple, and which is the most servile of all actions? because by servile works we serve but men, and by sin we render ourselves the servants of sin, and slaves of the Devil, according to that sentence of the Son of God, *Whoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin* *, and after him of his apostles †.

2. Examine carefully your conscience upon *Sundays*, and wipe away the sins of the past week by contrition and good works, and frequenting the sacraments.

Approach them as often as you can upon these days, but particularly when you have the least doubt of not being in the grace of God; never fail on this occasion. You would not upon a holy day appear before men with dirty or torn cloths; on the contrary, you dress yourself more decently in respect to the day; and dare you appear before God on the same day with a soul defiled with sin? We adorn more richly the altars and material temples to honour God on those days, and will you permit your soul, the living temple of God, to remain in a state which infinitely displeases him? "To what (says *S. Leo*) do all the exterior ornaments serve, if the interior be full of corruption and sin ‡? Keep well in mind that sentence of *S. Augustine*, which says, that he who does not preserve chastity in his body, and purity in his mind, only celebrates a feast of sadness and mourning upon holy days. He gives the reason, because it is impossible he should partake of real joy, whose conscience reproaches him with the thought, that his soul is inhabited by the Devil, and not by *Jesus Christ* §." Consider attentively this reason.

3. In the third place, be careful upon *Sundays* and solemn feasts to be present at the divine office which is performed in the church. *St. Augustine* ||, in his confessions, acknowledges the advantage he received from thence after his conversion. He says, that at the beginning he was sensibly moved with the church song, which softening his heart, drew from him abundance of tears, he profited more and more, as he began to be touched more feelingly by the sublime sense of the song, than by the song itself. This will happen to you, if you be present at the office of the church, not to discourse, to laugh, to look about to salute another, to see and to be seen, as it happens to many by a sad and deplorable abuse; but with a great interior modesty, with a mind recollected and very intent upon pious things.

4. Often

* John viii. 33.
S. Aug. Serm. 225.

† Rom. vi. and 2 Pet. ii.
|| Lib. 10. Cap. 33.

‡ Serm. 3. de Quadrag.

4. Often hearken to the word of God in sermons, discourses, exhortations, and instructions, which are made in the church upon *Sundays* and solemn feasts. At home on those days apply yourself to the reading of some pious book, which may be profitable to your salvation. Converse with devout persons, and seek their company. Let your recreation be more moderate on those days, and always accompanied with a modesty agreeable to the sanctity of the day.

In short, employ the repose of holy days in thinking upon the * eternal rest they represent, to which you must earnestly aspire, and in meditating on the great and happy † solemnity which shall be celebrated in heaven, where the sight of God, filling the blessed with immortal joy, will afford a feast which will never have an end, but will last for all eternity. It is principally on these days, *Theotime*, that we must say with the prophet, *How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise thee for ever and ever. Blessed is the man whose help is from thee: in his heart he hath disposed to ascend to the eternal temple of God by steps of virtue, in the vale of tears, in the place which he hath set, or brought himself to by his sin ‡.*

C H A P. XXII.

Of going to the parish.

I ADD here this subject, because it contributes to the sanctification of holy days, of which I have spoken, and is a powerful means of conducting men to solid piety; wherefore let me give you such necessary instruction, as you may make use of all your life.

The first institution of parishes.

To give you an account of this from the beginning, you must know, that the apostles, after the ascension of the Son of God, having changed the sabbath of the *Jews* to the first day of the week, to be dedicated to the service of God, and to the sanctification of souls, appointed on that day the assemblies of the faithful, where every one should be duly present, to pray in common, to hear the divine word, to assist at the celebration of the divine mysteries, at the participation of the sacraments, and at the gathering of alms for the assistance of Christians in necessity.

The acts of the apostles give us the marks of this institution. *When we were assembled to break bread on the first day of the week;* and S. Paul §, *on the first day of the week let every one of you put apart with himself, laying up what it shall well please him.* Where by the words, *Una sabbati, One of the week*, is understood the first day of the

* H.b. iv. † Isaiah xxxiii. ‡ Psalm lxxxiii. 2, 3, 5, 6. § Cor. viii.

the week, so called by *St. Mark* *, *early on one of the sabbaths*; that is, the first, as *St. Matthew* † explains it.

In both these places the day of the resurrection of our Lord is spoken of, which was called from thence the *Lord's day*, as *St. John* calls it ‡.

As to the assemblies of that day, the tenth canon of the apostles clearly ordains, that "All Christians who were gathered together in the church on solemn days, should hear there the sacred scriptures, and the gospel, and be there present at the prayer, even till the end, and there communicate §."

St. Ignatius, cotemporary with the apostles, makes mention thereof in one of his epistles, and other ancient authors; but above all *S. Justin Martyr*, who lived in the second age, in the year 150; and *Tertullian*, who lived 30 years after.

S. Justin, in the second apology he made for the Christians, describes distinctly all that was performed in those assemblies, which is the same that is now done at the parish Mass. He speaks in these terms: "On the day which is called Sunday there are assembled all those who live in the town or country, and there are read the book of the apostles, or the writings of the prophets, according as time permits. After the reading, he who presides makes a discourse, by which he instructs the people, and exhorts them to practise those excellent things which were read: afterwards we all rise and offer our prayers to God. These things being finished, there is an oblation made of bread and wine and water, the celebrant continuing his prayers and thanksgiving, the people answering by their acclamations, Amen. Then is performed the distribution and communication of the holy mysteries to every one present. Lastly, those who are more wealthy, give their alms, which are gathered, and sent into the hands of the superior, who employs them to the necessities of the poor, of whom he is to take a charge ¶."

Tertullian in his apologetic ||, says, "That the Christians assembled together in companies, forming as it were a body of an army, wherein by their prayers they encounter with God, to whom this kind of violence is very pleasing. In these meetings a portion of scripture was read, which served to nourish faith, to raise hope, and strengthen the courage of the faithful. There were made necessary exhortations and admonitions to every one; moreover when any one had committed a fault that deserved chastisement, he was punished by exclusion from these holy assemblies, which was accounted one of the greatest punishments." Afterwards he speaks of alms, which were there given for the relief of the poor and afflicted.

We must here take notice, that during the three first ages of the church, wherein amidst severe persecutions, it frequently happened

* *Mark* xvi. 2. † *Matt.* xxviii. 1. ‡ *Apocalypse* i. 10. § *Can.* 10. *Apost.*
¶ *S. Justin apol.* 2. || *Chap.* 39.

happened that the Christians had not any appointed public places, wherein to meet, but held their assemblies in private houses, and very secretly. But after God was pleased to give peace and liberty to the church under Christian emperors, they openly began to build churches, where the faithful assembled on *Sundays* and holidays, under the conduct of a pastor, who was given them to have the care of their souls.

It was then, when the use of parishes and of the parochial mass on these holy days began to appear in its lustre, which has ever since been kept up in the church, and recommended to the faithful with much care, as a thing necessary for the service of God, and the salvation of souls, for the instruction of the people, and regulation of their lives; moreover to preserve the order and discipline of the church, it has been also commanded as a matter of obligation.

This appears from most councils, both general and particular, in every age of the church, and lastly, from the council of *Trent*, which renewing and confirming the former, in the 22d session orders bishops "To exhort their people to go frequently to their parishes, at least upon Sundays and solemn feasts; even to oblige them thereto by ecclesiastical censures." And in the 24th session it ordains also, that "Bishops carefully admonish their people, that every one is obliged to be present at the parish, to hear there the word of God, when it can be done without great inconvenience."

I therefore exhort you to be faithful and assiduous at your parish church, and not to absent yourself for any frivolous reasons. Consider her as your mother, who has brought you forth to *Jesus Christ* by holy baptism, and educated you in Christianity: she is charged with the care of your soul, she must answer for you to God, she must conduct you through your life in the road to salvation, and assist you at the hour of death. Love her tenderly as a child loves his mother, be obedient to her, receive from her your spiritual sustenance of instruction and the holy sacraments; walk under her eye and government with respect and confidence; receive from others all the assistance you can, but expect from her your principal direction. Diligently practise that important admonition of the apostle, *Obey your prelates, and be subject to them, for they watch, as being to render an account of your souls that they may do this with joy, and not with sorrow; for this is not expedient for you* *.

* Heb. xiii. 17.

T H E
INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH
IN
CHRISTIAN PIETY.

P A R T III.

Of the obstacles which withdraw young persons from virtue.

IT is not sufficient for him who conducts another in a journey, to shew him the way he must keep, and the means he must make use of to arrive at the place assigned; he must also warn him of the dangers he will meet with in the way, and arm him against all obstacles that may retard or hinder the happy success of his journey. Thus the angel *Raphael*, of whom we have spoken above, did not content himself to guide young *Tobias*, but secured him from the obstacles which presented themselves to him in the way; and amongst others, from the monster he met upon the banks of the river *Tigris*, from which he not only protected him, but caused him to reap a great advantage from it.

For this reason, dear *Theotime*, after having shewn you the way to salvation, and the means you ought to practise to acquire virtue in your youth, it is necessary I should discover to you the impediments you will find in the way. This is what I shall perform in this third part, wherein I shall lay open the causes which usually ruin those of your age, by involving them in vice; and I shall shew you the means how to preserve, and even benefit yourself very much by them for your improvement in virtue.

C H A P. I.

The first obstacle to the salvation of youth, the want of instruction.

THE first hinderance to the salvation of youth, is ignorance, or want of instruction. We must know virtue, before we can love it; and to know it, it is necessary we should be instructed therein, as we are not able of ourselves to learn it, bringing nothing with us into the world but ignorance and sin. God says by his prophet, that *his people were led away captive, because they had not knowledge*;

knowledge * ; that is, the instruction and knowledge of their salvation. And the wise man says, that *where there is no knowledge of the soul, there is no good* †.

This obstacle is great, and the first cause of the corruption of youth. It is by so much the more to be deplored, as it is common and even general, there being no doubt but that the greatest part of youth are lost for want of instruction. Whilst fathers neglect to instruct their children in true piety. Masters bestow often the greatest part of their labour in advancing their scholars in learning, and very little in making them understand the science of salvation; children unacquainted with the necessity of it, not only concern themselves little about being instructed, but frequently fly instruction all they can, by which means they continue in ignorance, in sinful habits, and are lost without remedy.

As a proof of this truth, I shall produce two examples, though very different from each other. *S. Austin*, in his confessions ‡, deploring the corruption of his youth, attributes it to the want of instruction, and to the blindness of his father, who using all endeavours to advance his son in his studies, and make him learned and eloquent, neglected in the mean time the most necessary thing, *viz.* the care of his instruction in virtue, without which all science could but serve to render him more displeasing to God, and more unworthy of his grace.

On the contrary, the scripture making a recital of the noble action of chaste *Susanna*, who chose rather to expose herself to the false accusations of those two infamous old men, and to be prosecuted to death, than to sin in the sight of God, by consenting to a detestable crime, which those wretched men solicited her to, attributes the cause of this holy action to her piety, and to the instruction she received from her parents. She was *one that feared God: For her parents being just, had instructed their daughter according to the law of Moses* §.

Dear *Theotime*, beware of this obstacle, as *Practice.* one of the greatest impediments to your salvation; love instruction; and be persuaded the greatest evil which can befall your youth, is to be ignorant of the truths which contribute to so happy an end; exert yourself in avoiding this misfortune, which infallibly brings on ruin. Seek after instruction by the means we have pointed out above in Part II. Chap. 3, 4, and 5; and call to mind often that excellent sentence of *Solomon*, *The heart of the wise seeketh instruction: and the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness* ||.

* Isa. v. 13. † Prov. xix. 2. ‡ Lib. 2. Cap. 3. § Dan. xiii. 2, 3. || Prov. xv. 14.

C H A P. II.

The second obstacle, the too much indulgence of parents, their ill example, and the bad instruction they give their children.

IT is but too true, that the ruin of children springs most commonly from the fault of parents, who are wanting in this great obligation God has imposed upon them, of educating their children in his fear, and disposing them to virtue.

Now there are four defects which parents may be guilty of in this duty, which most frequently are the cause of the corruption and ruin of children. 1. When they neglect to instruct them in the knowledge of piety, and to imprint early in their minds the maxims of virtue and their salvation. 2. When they are too indulgent, giving too much liberty, and not correcting them when they do ill. 3. When they give them bad example by their actions. 4. When they instruct them in things contrary to piety. We have spoken above of the first defect.

Four faults parents may commit in the instruction of their children.

As to the second, it is plain how common this fault is among parents, and how it daily ruins children. They caress their children with a foolish and blind love, which regards nothing but the present and sensible good of their children, and are afraid of giving them the least trouble, by keeping them within the bounds of virtue by a discreet admonition, or by a reasonable correction; they choose rather to leave them in their wicked inclinations, which, for want of correction encreasing with age, make them wicked and vicious for the remainder of their life, and hereafter miserable for all eternity.

Thrice unhappy parents! who by this sort of mildness precipitate themselves with their children into the depth of wickedness; like those foolish animals, which kill their young ones by too fondly embracing them. Blind fathers! who see not that this mercy you shew to your children, is the greatest cruelty you can be guilty of in their regard; you would not be so cruel if you took away their life with your own hands; as by this inhumanity you would but destroy their bodies, whereas by your unreasonable fondness you cause the ruin and the eternal loss of their souls. The time will come when your children, whom you thus indulge, will curse you, demand of God vengeance against you, and will accuse you of being authors of their misery; witness he who being condemned to death, cried out aloud, "It is not the judge, but my mother who is the cause of my punishment."

Your criminal fondness will one day draw upon yourselves and children the curse of God. Upon yourselves, because you neither instructed nor corrected them, when requisite. Upon your children

dren, because through your indulgence, they gave themselves over to vice and disorder.

See the example of the high priest *Heli* above, and learn from that terrible punishment God inflicted upon him, what you ought to expect; for all the miseries which befell him, his children and whole house, had for their first and principal source his great indulgence to his children in not correcting them. Hear the testimony God himself gives thereof: *I will judge, says he, his house for ever, for iniquity, because he (Heli) knew that his sons did wickedly and did not chastise them**.

I cannot sufficiently exaggerate this fault of parents, *Theotime*, to raise in you so great a horror as it deserves. It is to exhort you, if God has blessed you with wise and virtuous parents, who instruct you in virtue, and reprehend you when faulty, to acknowledge the obligation you owe to God, and make good use of this high favour, by rendering yourself docile, and easy to be guided by them. But on the contrary, if your parents, forgetful of their own duty and your salvation, fail to reprehend you when faulty, do not set a value on such indulgence, but look upon it as the most pernicious and destructive of all things, and fear least you be ruined by their unhappy indulgence. Beg of God most earnestly that he would change their hearts, and give you masters who may supply their defect, and take notice of your conduct to reform it, if you should wander ever so little out of the path of virtue.

I say the same, if your parents be not only negligent in reprehending you, but, what is yet worse, if they give you bad example, teaching you, as it often happens, by their actions, to love the pleasures of this life, to desire riches, to affect vanity, to be proud, ambitious, passionate, revengeful, not to suffer the least injury, to be immodest in words, addicted to intemperance, to drunkenness, to impurity, and other such sins; and yet more, if they be so miserable as to teach you by their discourses any of these vices, approve or praise you when you have committed them: Dear child, stand in fear upon all these occasions, your salvation cannot be in greater danger; and having recourse to God, beseech him that he would permit you to discern good from evil, that he would strengthen your mind against the bad impressions you shall receive, and that he will not permit you to be lost through their fault, who ought to contribute most to your salvation.

C H A P. III.

The third obstacle to the salvation of youth, untractableness.

SAINTE *Jerome* very justly remarks, "that although the depravity of children springs often from the fault of parents and masters, yet it very frequently proceeds also from the children themselves"

* 1 Kings iii. 13.

“ themselves, who will not receive instruction ;” this fault is called *untractableness* *.

This untractableness is a want of submission to the conduct of others, or a secret presumption of one’s self, by which we will not be informed of the truths we ought to know, nor receive advice in those things we ought to do, nor be reprov’d and corrected when we have erred, nor exhorted to good when we have departed from it.

This vice is one of the worst qualities a mind can be infected with.

A very bad quality of the mind.

For if we consider its causes, it proceeds from pride, which makes us contemn all that comes from another ; or from obstinacy, or confidence in our own judgment, or from a too great levity of mind which thinks upon nothing with care, but flights the most interesting concerns.

Its causes.

If we consider its effects, it alone is capable of leading youth into all manner of vice, because it takes away all means of correction or amendment ; for how should one do good if he will not know it ? How correct his faults if he will not be rebuked ? The sick who will not own his distemper, and rejects the proper remedies, must not expect a cure.

Its effects.

The holy scripture in many places, but chiefly in the book of *Proverbs*, strongly inveighs against this vice, as one of the greatest obstacles to salvation, and frequently exhorts young persons to receive instruction, counsel, and admonition.

As for instruction, it says, that *he that rejecteth wisdom and discipline, is unhappy* †. *The wise of heart receiveth precepts : a fool is beaten with lips* ‡. *The heart of the wicked seeketh after evils, but the righteous heart seeketh after knowledge* §. *Hast thou seen a man wise in his own conceit ? There shall be more hope of a fool than of him* ||. *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes ; but he that is wise hearkeneth unto counsels* ¶. *He that trusteth in his own heart, that is, in his own mind and conduct, is a fool : but he that walketh wisely, he shall be saved* **. *Hear counsel and receive instruction, that thou mayst be wise in thy latter end* ††. *He that loveth correction, loveth knowledge : but he that hateth reproof is foolish* ‡‡. *A corrupt man loveth not one that reproveth him : nor will he go to the wise* §§. *He that rejecteth instruction, despiseth his own soul : but he that yieldeth to reproof possesseth understanding* |||. *The wicked man impudently hardeneth his face : but he that is righteous, correcteth his way* ¶¶. *A hard heart shall fare evil at the last* ***. *He that hateth reproof shall die* †††.

Above

* St. Hier. in cap. 6 *Michee*. † *Wisd.* iii. 11. ‡ *Prov.* x. 8. § *Prov.* xxvii. 21. || *Prov.* xxvi. 12. ¶ *Prov.* xii. 15. ** *Prov.* xxviii. 26. †† *Prov.* xix. 20. ‡‡ *Prov.* xii. 1. §§ *Prov.* xv. 12. ||| *Prov.* xv. 32. ¶¶ *Prov.* xxi. 29. *** *Eccli.* iii. 27. ††† *Prov.* xv. 10.

Above all, take notice what it says in the 29th chapter of the *Proverbs*. *The man, that with a stiff neck despiseth him that reproveth him, shall suddenly be destroyed : and health shall not follow him* *. What can be said more strong to shew the greatness of this evil, and raise in us an apprehension of the heinousness of it.

Wherefore, *Theotime*, guard against this vice, as one of the greatest obstacles to your salvation ; own it, if this be your misfortune, and use all possible endeavours to rid yourself of it, and to obtain a tractable mind, which loves to be instructed, counselled, reprov'd, and exhorted to good. For which end :

1. Beg daily of God this spirit, and with earnestness as a thing of the greatest consequence, and on which your all depends.

2. Keep always in your mind that excellent advice of *Solomon* : *My Son hear me, and depart not from the words of my mouth, lest thou mourn at the last, and say : why have I hated instruction, and my heart consented not to reproof, and have not heard the voice of them that taught me, and have not inclined my ear to my masters* † ? But alas, *Theotime*, it will be too late to lament the evil when it happens, and when there will be no remedy.

3. Persuade yourself that you are in an age full of ignorance, subject to many failings, wherein you are not able to conduct yourself, but that you necessarily stand in need of the direction of others, who can instruct, counsel, reprehend, and admonish you. During youth, tractableness and submission to the instruction of others is so necessary, that on this virtue depends your good education, your advancement in virtue, your happiness in this life, and your eternal salvation in the next.

4. Love to be instructed in virtue and piety by whomsoever you can. Ask counsel freely, even in those things wherein you think you have sufficient understanding. What an excellent maxim, to do all things with advice ! *My son, do thou nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done* ‡.

Be not offended when you are reprov'd for your faults. " It is a great sin (says *St. Jerome* §) to hate him who reprehends you, principally if the correction proceeds from the love he bears you." Defend not yourself with obstinacy, which is a sign of great pride ; but, on the contrary, humbly receive a reproof, acknowledge your fault, and endeavour to amend.

5. Remember, that tractableness does not only consist in willingly receiving instruction, counsel, reprehension, and exhortation, but also in advantaging yourself by them, and putting them in practice.

Let me give you that excellent saying of *St. Jerome* ; " It is good to obey your elders ; and to follow the orders of superiors ; and,

" after

* *Prov.* xxix. 1. † *Prov.* v. 7, 11, 12, 13. ‡ *Eccli.* xxxii. 24. § *Amos.* Cap. 5.

“ after the rules of scripture, learn from others the path of life
“ which you ought to follow, and make not use of a very bad
“ master, viz. your own presumption *.”

C H A P. IV.

The fourth obstacle, inconstancy.

IF untractableness be very common among young people, inconstancy in good is yet more frequent, and a very great impediment to their salvation. Some youth are found tractable and easy in receiving instruction, counsel, and admonition, and those who are not so, are often cured of their untractableness by proper methods of lenity or severity. But it is likewise certain that young persons are not always steady in practising what they are taught. They have a spirit subject to change, which adheres to all sorts of objects, lets itself be carried away by all its first motions, and agitated by different passions, which permit it not to continue long in the same state. They are scarce able to make one firm resolution, especially as to what concerns virtue, much less put it in practice when made; the very first temptation causes them to yield, and to forget all their good purposes.

If inconstancy be not corrected in good time, it proves a great obstacle to the salvation of young people, and absolutely hinders them from advancing in virtue. A plant cannot take root in a quicksand, nor virtue in a light mind, which changes upon all occasions.

Wherefore the wise man says, *Winnow not with every wind, and go not into every way; be steadfast in the way of the Lord* †.

This inconstancy principally arises

1. From a levity natural to that age, which *Three causes of* renders young persons inconstant in all their *inconstancy.* actions. They are changeable in all their inclinations, thoughts, designs, and resolutions, and, of course, inconstant also in good.

2. From their not being thoroughly convinced of the importance of their salvation, and of the necessity they are under of dedicating themselves to virtue in their youth.

3. From a want of conduct, and not taking the counsel of others for ordering their life; or if so, from again presently following the sudden impulse of their fickle mind, in opposition to these three causes.

Endeavour first, to correct in yourself, as much as you can, that natural levity of your age, which makes you subject to change in most

* Hier. Epist. ad Demetriadem de vlrq. servanda. † Eccli. v. 11, 12.

most of your actions. Be steady in all that you perform; change not easily your resolutions, your enterprises, nor your employments, except with reason and counsel: in a word, govern yourself by reason, and not by fancy and caprice.

Secondly, Study to settle your mind in piety by good thoughts, and frequent reflections on your salvation, and on the necessity you are under of living virtuously in your youth.

Thirdly, Submit yourself to the conduct of a prudent confessor; follow his counsels, and the rule of life he shall prescribe; give him an account of your actions from time to time, that he may set you in a good way when you are out of it; perform nothing, of how little consequence soever, without his counsel, or that of some other prudent person.

But above all, beg of God frequently that he will bestow upon you a mind steady to good resolutions, and establish you in piety by the help of his grace. *Perfect thou (O Lord) my goings, that is, my actions, in thy paths: that my footsteps be not moved* *. Have often before your eyes that excellent sentence of the wise man; *A holy man continueth in wisdom like the sun, which never loses his light, but a fool, that is, a sinner, is changed as the moon, which is not constantly in the same state* †. See, *Theotime*, which of the two ranks you chuse; you would not be thought a fool by men, and yet you are certainly such in regard to God, if you waver in his service.

C H A P. V.

The fifth obstacle, the shame of doing good.

AMONG the means the Devil has invented to pervert souls, there is none which he makes a greater advantage of than the shame of doing good; a shame by which he deplorably seduces weak minds, and chiefly youth; who being more apt to receive the impressions of fear and shame, give that malicious spirit an opportunity of abusing their facility, in order to make them conceive that shame for virtue, which they should only have for sin.

To effect this he puts into their mind these false and vain imaginations; that virtue is contemned among men, that they are little esteemed who follow it, that if they should apply themselves to virtue they will be despised, exposed to the censures of obloquy, and mocked at. He actually draws on the contempt and scoffs of others; and by these artifices he withholds them from the way of virtue, stopping and stifling in them, by this foolish shame, all the good thoughts

* Psalm xvi. 5. † Eccii. xxviii. 12.

thoughts and desires they had conceived concerning their salvation. And sometimes this unhappy shame gains such influence over their minds, that they not only blush to do good and appear virtuous, but even glory in their vices, and feel a certain confusion not to be as wicked as the most vicious; it happened thus to St. *Augustin*, who deplored this his misfortune and blindness*.

If this pernicious shame has taken possession of your mind, you must account it one of the greatest obstacles to salvation; and if you labour not in good time to overcome it, it will infallibly be your ruin. To conquer it, arm yourself with these reflections:

1. Why do you blush? Are you ashamed of virtue, and the service of God, than which *Remedy.* there is nothing more honourable in the world?

You esteem it a glory to serve a prince upon earth, and will you blush at the service of the king of heaven, your sovereign Lord, to whom you owe all that you are? What an absurdity! one never blushes except it be for something either wicked or indecent, or too base or unworthy of one's self: so that if you be ashamed of virtue, you must rank it among these, than which nothing can be more preposterous.

2. Before whom do you blush? Before the wicked, whose judgment is entirely perverted, thinking, that to be evil which is good, and that good which is evil, and having no other rule for their opinion than their depraved inclinations. If they despise you, it is because they hate virtue, and those who follow it. *The worship of God is an abomination to a sinner*, says the wise man †. *Fools hate them that flee from vice* ‡. *He that walketh in the right way, and feareth God, is despised by him that goeth by an infamous way* §. If you are fond of the esteem of men, why seek you not the esteem of the wise and virtuous, who respect and honour you when you do well.

3. Call to mind that dreadful threat which the Son of God denounces against all those who blush at his service; *Whoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his glory*; that is, he will not acknowledge him for his ||. Remember that dreadful confusion, which at the day of judgment will cover the face of those who have blushed in this life at the service of God, when their sins shall be exposed to the view of the whole world; and on account of the shame they had for virtue, they shall be abandoned to eternal disgrace and confusion, which shall never be blotted out of the memory of the angels and saints. *I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall never be forgotten* ¶.

Beg frequently of God, that he would *Practice.* strengthen your mind against this misfortune,

which

* L. 2, confess. c. 3. † Eccl. i. 32. ‡ Prov. xiii. 19. § Prov. xiv. 2.
|| Luke ix. 26. ¶ Jer. xxiii. 40.

which is nothing but the pure imagination of a weak spirit. Accustom yourself betimes to perform good works, without regarding what others speak or think. Despise their contempts, and slight their scoffs, and reflect what great folly it is to prefer the esteem of men before your eternal salvation; and to please a small number of abandoned wretches at the expence of meeting the displeasure of all wise persons, of all the saints in heaven, and of God himself. Weigh well this reflection.

C H A P. VI.

The sixth obstacle, wicked company.

A R T I C L E I.

How hurtful it is.

HOW should I rejoice, *Theotime*, if I had eloquence enough to make you, and all those of your age, understand the greatness of this impediment to salvation, and set clearly before your eyes the multitude of young people, who are daily ruined by wicked company!

A snare of the Devil for young people.

It is in bad company where the Devil usually sets his snares for youth; those whom he could not destroy either by the want of instruction, or the indulgence of parents, by the untractableness of their minds, or by inconstancy, or a shame of doing well, he perverts by drawing them into bad company. Their discourse, their example, and wicked conversation, serve him as instruments to corrupt the most holy, and subvert the state of a good conscience; and frequently by one of these means he has caused great disorders in souls almost ignorant of sin, and hitherto virtuous amidst the most dangerous occasions.

It is surprising that this malignant spirit should find no instruments more powerful to destroy men, than men themselves? that they should be servants and ministers to execute against their own brethren the malice he has conceived against them, and the execrable design he has laid to involve them with himself in eternal damnation? I know not whether we should most deplore those who contribute by their discourse or example to the ruin of their brethren, or those who suffer themselves to be perverted for want of flying and avoiding such company, more than persons infected with the plague.

Concerning the first, must they not be highly wicked to destroy by their conversation those for whom *Jesus Christ* has died *? as if it

* Rom. xiv. 15.

it were not sufficient to damn themselves *; but also to be the cause of the damnation of their brethren; to be the authors their corruption, and of an infinite number of sins which they commit; to be the instruments of the malice of the Devil, and perform themselves the office of that detestable fiend, which is to draw men into sin, and precipitate them into hell. Wretched *Cains*, you must answer for the souls of your brethren; the voice of their blood which you have spilt, that is, of their salvation which they have lost, cries to God for vengeance against you; he will demand it at your hands, you must render him an account of it, soul for soul. *Wo*, says the Son of God, *to that man by whom the scandal cometh* †; that is, who draws others into sin.

As for the others, are not they as much to be deplored, who permit themselves thus unfortunately to be perverted by the conversation of the wicked? which often befalls them after they have been well fore-warned, that there is nothing more dangerous for youth than wicked company, and that it is the rock where many are irreparably shipwrecked; frequently even after they had learned it by experience to the great hazard of their salvation. After all this, what a deplorable blindness it must be not to avoid these precipices, but to go wilfully without fear into such company, which they ought to shun more than death itself.

Beware of so great an impediment to salvation, which you risk for want of this precaution. Harken to the prophets, who cry out to all those who desire to be saved, *Depart, depart, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing* ‡. *Flee ye from the midst of Babylon, and let every one save his own life* §.

Give ear to the wise man who exhorts you with a fatherly affection; *My son, if sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them. If they shall say: Come with us, &c. My son, walk not thou with them, restrain thy foot from their paths. For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood* ||. *Be not delighted in the paths of the wicked, neither let the way of evil men please thee. Flee from it, pass not by it: go aside, and forsake it* ¶.

A R T I C L E II.

Two things pernicious in wicked company, discourse and example.

THERE are two things in the conversation of the wicked, which you must stand in dread of, their discourse and example.

As to discourse, St. Paul the apostle cries out aloud to all, *Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners* **. *Shun* (says he to Timothy) *profane and vain babblings; for they grow much towards ungodliness* ††. St. James says, *that the tongue is a fire, which setteth*

* 2 Tim. iii. 13. † Matt. xviii. 7. ‡ Isa. lii. 11. § Jer. li. 6. || Prov. i. 10, 11, 15, 16. ¶ Prov. iv. 14, 15. ** 1 Cor. xv. 33. †† 2 Tim. ii. 16.

setteth on fire the wheel of our nativity, being set on fire by hell *. David says that the throat of sinners is an open sepulchre, from whence issue noisome stench^es to infect souls †. That they have sharpened their tongues like a serpent : and the venom of asps is under their lips ‡, by which they envenom those who give attention to them.

Though vicious persons may sometimes forbear their wicked discourse, yet their example never fails to make strong impressions. He that toucheth pitch, says the wise man, shall be defiled with it : and he that hath fellowship with the proud, shall put on pride §. Be not a friend to an angry man, and do not walk with a furious man : lest perhaps thou learn his ways ||. He that walketh with the wise shall be wise : a friend of fools, that is, of sinners, shall become like to them ¶. Example has an incredible influence over the minds of youth towards evil. The friendship that is contracted with the wicked leads to condescension, which strongly inclines to imitation. “ O friendship, what an enemy art thou (says St. Augustine) to the good of souls ! O blindness of mind, which caused us to commit sin only by imitation, and to please others. When they said, Come let us do some bad action, we were ashamed not to comply *.”

A remarkable instance of the effects of bad company.

That you may be convinced of depth of the vice into which evil company may bring young men, hearken to what the same saint reports of himself, deploring the unhappy state to which he was reduced by that means. “ I so blindly plunged myself into vice,” says he, “ that amongst those of my age I blushed not to be as wicked as they, when I heard them glory in their sins, and boast in proportion to their degree of guilt, I committed sin not only for the pleasure of the deed, but from a desire of praise. What is there in the world but vice which deserves to be blamed ? Yet I was so depraved, that I sought to become more vicious, lest I should be blamed : And when I could not equal the most impious of my companions in wickedness, I feigned sins which I never committed, lest I should be accounted more contemptible, as I was more innocent, and lest I should be esteemed less infamous, as I appeared more chaste. See with what sort of companions I conversed, when I walked in the wretched path of Babylon, that is, in the wicked part of my youth, in the stinking dirt wherein I wallowed, as if I had rolled myself in precious odours and sweet perfumes ††.”

This was the deplorable state to which wicked company brought St. Augustine in his youth ; a state out of which he could not be drawn but with the greatest difficulty, and by a particular miracle of divine grace, as we have shewn above, Part I. Chap 12.

* Jam. iii. 6. † Ps. v. 11. ‡ Ps. cxxxix. § Eccli. xiii. 1. || Prov. xxii. 24, 25. ¶ Prov. xiii. 20. ** S. Aug. lib. confess. 9. †† Lib. 2. confess. cap. 2.

A R T I C L E III.

Of four sorts of wicked companions which must be avoided.

FIRST, *Theotime*, abhor the company of those who make open profession of vice, as impious persons and libertines; and of all those who seek not to conceal the greatest vices, as impurity, swearing, drunkenness, but glory in them. *They who are glad, says the wise man, when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things* *.

Libertines.

2. Fly as from a plague those who scoff at virtue, who solicit you to sin, or who entertain you with lewd discourse, although they themselves appear not openly vicious. Wicked discourse is always prejudicial, from whencesoever it comes; it constantly produces the same effect, which is to introduce sin into the soul of him who willingly gives ear to it.

Lewd discourse.

3. Avoid the company of others who dissemble more, yet are not less dangerous, who will not solicit you openly to sin, but divert you from the exercise of virtue, as from prayer, from frequenting the sacraments, from reading good books; who tell you good things are neither convenient nor necessary for you; that they are not proper for you at this time, that you have something else to do; and instead of these entertain you only with vain discourse of pleasures and pastimes, of the hopes of the world, of vanity and pomp, &c. This conversation, *Theotime*, is very hurtful, although it may not appear so: for it saps the foundation of virtue, and imperceptibly destroys it.

Dissemblers.

Fly the company of idle and slothful young people, who have no employment, or comply very ill with that wherein they are engaged: otherwise by their discourse and example they will persuade you to leave your employment and work, to pass your time in merriment; they will teach you to love play, to haunt public houses, to frequent balls and comedies; and from this idle life they will draw you into vice. Observe well this advice, and be assured, that there are no companions more dangerous than these.

Idle young persons.

Remember that sooner or later the divine vengeance will overtake the wicked, either visibly or invisibly. *In the congregation of sinners, says the wise man, a fire shall be kindled, and in an unbelieving nation wrath shall flame out* †. If you be found amongst them, you will be involved in their ruin. *The way of sinners is made plain with stones, and in their end is hell, and darkness, and pains* ‡. For this reason I say to you with the prophet, *Depart from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be involved in their sins* §. Woe be to him, who being forewarned, avoids not this precipice and eternal misfortune.

Read

* Prov. ii. 14. † Eccli. xvi. 7. ‡ Eccli. xxi. 11. § Num. xvi. 26.

Read hereafter, Chap. 8. Art. 3. the history of a young man, who being perverted by wicked company, died in despair, crying out, "Woe be to him that seduced me."

C H A P. VII.

The seventh obstacle to the salvation of youth, idleness.

THIS, *Theotime*, is one of the greatest obstacles to salvation, and that which either causes or encreases all the precedent obstacles, besides many others. Idleness occasions ignorance and want of instruction, which cannot be attained without labour. Idleness begets untractableness; for a slothful mind will learn nothing: the dread of taking pains, makes him esteem himself sufficiently knowing, and refuse to receive the instruction and counsel of others, to avoid the trouble of putting them in practice. *The sluggard*; says the scripture, *is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that speak sentences* *. Idleness is the cause of inconstancy; *the sluggard willeth and willeth not* †. To-day he desires one thing, to-morrow another; to-day he will be good, to-morrow he changes his resolution. Idleness causes a shame of doing well, and cools that courage which is necessary in the pursuit of virtue. *Fear casteth down the slothful* ‡. It produces those evil inclinations, which spring up in our souls more abundantly than ill weeds in a fertile soil, which the gardener neglects to cultivate. Idleness puts us in pursuit, and in the way of bad company and dangerous amusements. Idleness is commonly the mother of that fatal vice of impurity. It accustoms us to many disorders, and frequently puts us in the occasion of sin. Moreover, it disqualifies youth for the state of life, in which they are to be hereafter engaged.

In a word, it is, "The sink of all temptations and wicked thoughts, (says St. Bernard) the mother of follies and step-mother of virtues, the death of the soul, the sepulchre of a living man, the receptacle of all evil. *Idleness has taught much evil* ||."

Ought we not to be struck with dread to see *How common amongst young persons* this sin, which is the cause of so many evils, yet so common among youth, that it seems natural to them? The greatest part lead an idle and indolent life, flying labour as death itself, applying themselves to nothing serious; or if they undertake any thing, they presently abandon it, or at best acquit themselves very ill of it. They are fond of nothing but pleasure and diversions. Play, parties of pleasure, good cheer, sleeping by day and roving by night, these are the chief employments of their life, and their most serious occupations.

This

* Prov. xxvi. 16. † Prov. xiii. 4. ‡ Prov. xviii. 8. § Eccli. xxxiii. 29.

This evil has in such a manner taken possession of their hearts, that they will not so much as know it, for fear of being obliged to forsake it. *How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?* says the wise man, *When wilt thou rise out of thy sleep,* of idleness, which has made thee so drowsy? *Want shall come upon thee as a traveller, and poverty as a man armed* *. Open your heart, dear *Theotime*, to the voice of the Holy Ghost, in order to banish idleness, from thence, or hinder it from ever coming there. *The remedy.* For this end fortify your mind against this vice by the following reflections :

1. Consider that all men are born to labour; *All men are obliged to labour.* God has condemned them thereto by a solemn sentence which he pronounced at the beginning

of the world. *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken* †. If then you would be exempt and lead an idle life, you resist the will of God, and break through the order he has so solemnly established. What reason can you alledge for exempting yourself from so just and general a law, from which none were ever dispensed? and if you are not, upon what pretext can you persist in an idle life?

2. If men be obliged to labour all their life-time, they have yet a stricter obligation to it during their youth, because if that age be not exercised in virtuous undertakings, it contracts many vices and wicked habits, which continue all the rest of their life. Because youth is the proper time *Chiefly young men.* to cultivate the mind, and form it to good, and wherein alone they may render themselves capable of any future employment. Time lost in any age never returns; but there is this difference, that time lost in other ages, may sometimes be repaired; but time lost in youth is irreparable.

3. Consider attentively the grief you will one day feel, for losing the time of your youth, *The sorrow for the loss of time in youth.* when you shall find yourself unfit for employments, and incapable of any good, as it happens to many: you believe it not at present, but one day you will be sensible of it, when it is too late.

4. If this grief at present move you not, the rigorous account you shall give to God of the *The account that ill-spent time of your youth at his judgment, must be given.* ought to make you tremble. In that dreadful judgment of all your life shall be set before your eyes in order, one part after another; and the first article of the account which shall be examined, will be that of the employment you have followed in your youth: What will you answer to this question? There you will distinctly discover all the disorders which have sprung from that first fault; the ignorance it has caused in you, the sins it has made you commit, the vices wherein you have been involved, all the good

you

* Prov. vi. 9, 11. † Gen. iii. 19.

have been rendered incapable of. What have you to answer to all these things? And if you cannot justify yourself, what must be the consequence?

Many damned for the ill spending of their youth. 6. How many others are there now in hell, who acknowledge the origin of their damnation to arise from the ill spending of the time of their youth? If they could but hope for one moment of time, which you have now in your power, what would they not do to obtain it, and spend it to advantage? Is it possible that their misery does not move you, and that you will not grow wise at other men's expence, learning, by their example, to avoid that eternal misery into which their idleness has thrown them.

In order to avoid idleness, remember to perform two things. *Two things to be done against idleness.* The first is, to apply yourself to some commendable exercise, which may keep you employed the time of your youth; there is no state of life but has some employment annexed to it, even by the order of justice. The second is, to take care as much as you can never to be idle. Be ever employed either in your business, reading, or recreation. Let your recreations be accompanied with action either of body or mind. The Devil seeks no better opportunity than to find you idle, that he may tempt and surprize you. For this reason practise diligently that excellent advice of St. Jerome, "Be always doing something, that the Devil may always find you employed *."

C H A P. VIII.

The eighth obstacle, impurity.

WE are now come to the greatest, most powerful, and most universal of all the obstacles to the salvation of youth, viz. the sin of impurity. At the sight of which I cannot refrain from that expression of the prophet *Jeremy*: *Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes? and I will weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people †.* For who can attentively consider the infinite number of young people which this sin keeps miserably enslaved, the havoc it makes in their souls, the innumerable offences it causes them to commit, the disorder it brings, the misfortunes into which it daily precipitates them, and above all the height of misery, viz. the ruin of their soul, and eternal damnation: who can consider these things, I say, without having his heart pierced with sorrow, and without being moved with compassion, so far

* Hier Epist. ad Rust. † Jer. xi. 1.

far as to warn them of the danger, and assist in withdrawing them from the misfortune into which they blindly run ? For this reason, read attentively the following important reflections.

A R T I C L E I.

That the sin of impurity is the greatest enemy to youth, and damns more than all other vices together.

THAT this assertion is founded in truth, and that there is not much reason to question it : for it is made too clear and visible by daily experience, which evidently discovers two things. 1. That a great part of youth is unhappily addicted to this sin. 2. That among those who are inclined to it, there are many who are not addicted to any other sin.

We daily see the most innocent age of life corrupted by that abominable sin, and the most flourishing portion of God's church dishonoured by that detestable vice. They are no sooner capable of reason, than this vice attacks them ; it creeps into their minds, it gains their affections, it takes up their thoughts, it inflames their hearts with a love of carnal pleasures, which, daily encreasing with age, becomes so strong, that it is almost impossible to extinguish it.

This arises partly from the corruption of *Three causes of* our nature, which * is inclined to evil from its *impurity.* youth ; partly from the temper and constitution of that age, which the tenderness of the body, and heat of blood, render more susceptible of the impression of sensual pleasures, whence *Aristotle* calls it the vice of youth ; and partly also from the malice of the Devil, which assaults man in his youth on the weakest side, making use of the frailty of the flesh to overcome the spirit ; and as *St. Jerome* † judiciously observes, “ takes advantage of the “ heat of youth, by which he raises in their heart the fire of un- “ chaste love, enkindling in them a more burning and destructive “ furnace than that which the king of *Babylon* caused to be prepared “ for the three innocent children of *Israel*, because that could but “ consume their bodies, but this inflames their souls, and prepares “ them for another fire which shall never be consumed.”

They who attentively consider the depravity of morals usually reigning amongst youth, can never be sufficiently grieved. But what deserves most our tears, is, that this sin is often the sole cause of this corruption, as there are many who are not addicted to any other enormous sin ; or if they be, they are the effects of this ; so that if they were freed from this, they would lead a pure and irreproachable life : whereas, permitting themselves to be overcome by this unclean passion, they lead a life full of iniquity, and daily encreasing

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* Gen. viii. 21. † Epist ad Demetriad.

ing the number of their sins, and vicious habits, cast themselves into so deplorable a state, as to lose all hopes of amendment and salvation. Wretched sin! must thou thus destroy men when they first enter the way of salvation? must thou forcibly take away from God so many fair souls, which without thee would live in innocence, to sacrifice them to pleasures, and by pleasures to the Devil and everlasting flames? Cursed incontinence! who is there that can hate thee as thou deservest? To apprehend it more clearly, *Theotime*, read attentively that which follows, and judge of the cause by its effects.

A R T I C L E II.

Of the sad effects of the sin of impurity.

THE author of the book of the gift of chastity*, attributed to St. Cyprian, describes briefly a great number of the horrible effects of this sin: he says, that "immodesty is a detestable passion, which spares neither souls nor bodies, which renders men absolutely slaves to dishonest love, flattering them at the beginning, that it may more effectually destroy them. When it hath gotten possession of their hearts, it drains their substance together with their modesty; it raises the passions even to an extreme height, it destroys a good conscience, it is the mother of impertinence, the loss and ruin of the best part of life," that is, of youth.

Omitting the damage that sin causes to the body, honour and estate, I shall insist only upon the dreadful effects it produces in the soul, which I reduce to five or six.

The first is, the loss of the fear of God, which it causes in the soul, together with the ruin of every good inclination. Experience shews this so plainly, that we need not seek any other proof. We see many young people well

educated, who have very good inclinations in their youth, an aversion to evil, a great affection to piety, the fear of God strongly imprinted in their souls: now all these good qualities remain, if the sin of impurity does not take possession of their hearts; but when that has once entered into their mind, it entirely subverts them. It creeps in first by immodest thoughts, the thoughts produce the desire of carnal pleasures, the desire moves to unchaste actions, these sins repeated and multiplied, ruin all the good inclinations; things now appear far otherwise than before, the sin now seems no more so great, it becomes more familiar to them; and such an one who before had a great apprehension of one mortal sin, when he is once overcome by this brutal passion, is not dismayed to commit them by hundreds and thousands. What a change! what a subversion is this of conscience!

* De bono pudicitiae.

The second effect of this sin is a dislike, and even an aversion to virtue, and to all piety and goodness. It is not to be conceived how those who are infected with this vice, have an aversion to what regards their salvation. Prayer is tedious, the sacraments contemptible, the word of God moves them not, reading of pious books is insupportable. This is but too manifest by experience, and no wonder, *Theotime*; he who is distempered with a fever, takes no delight in the most delicious meats; on the contrary, they seem to him bitter, because his taste is depraved with some bitter quality. Thus he who is once seized with this burning fever of impurity, finds a strange loathing and dislike of all the most pious and religious things, by having his heart infected with carnal and impure affections, which permit him not to relish the sweetness of holy things. *The sensual man*, says S. Paul, that is, he who follows the motions of the animal or sensual part, *perceiveth not the things that are of the spirit of God* *. And, *They that are according to the flesh, mind the things that are of the flesh* †.

*Second effect a
disrelish of virtue.*

The third effect is a blindness of mind, which this sin produces in the soul, which hinders her from discerning good from bad, and judging of things as she ought. It is impossible that a person once possessed by that passion, should not have his judgment perverted, and esteem the things of salvation otherwise than he should: his attachment and inclination to this sin, makes him not account it so great an evil (for we ordinarily judge according to our inclinations) but think that he can withdraw himself when he pleases; it hinders him from seeing the dreadful consequences of this vice; it takes away the remembrance of the divine judgments, and frequently endeavours to banish God from his mind that he may sin more freely, as it is observed of those infamous old men, who attempted to corrupt the chastity of *Susanna*; *they were inflamed with lust towards her*, says the scripture, *and they perverted their own mind and turned away their eyes that they might not look unto heaven, nor remember just judgments* ‡. This is the proper and peculiar effect of impurity; it blinds the mind, and makes it hoodwink itself, stifling all good thoughts, that it may sin with a greater liberty, and with less remorse of conscience.

*Third effect, blind-
ness of mind.*

From this blindness of mind springs pride, the fourth effect of the sin of impurity, which hinders the mind from knowing its own good, makes it despise all admonitions, resist all remonstrances, and scoff at the most wholesome counsels. So that as this sin renders youth soft and pliable to vice, it makes them deaf to advice concerning their salvation. The wise man teaches you this truth which experience has sufficiently confirmed. *A man of sense*, says he,

*Fourth effect,
pride.*

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will

* 1 Cor ii. 14. † Rom viii. 5. ‡ Dan. xiii. 8, 9.

will praise every wise word he shall hear, and will apply it to himself: the luxurious man hath heard it, and it shall displease him, and he will cast it behind his back *. We need no other example of this truth than that of St. *Augustin*, in the second book of his confessions †, where he deplores the insupportable pride, with which he contemned the discreet admonitions of his pious mother, to whom next to God he owed his salvation.

Fifth effect, obstinacy in sin. The fifth effect is an obdurateness of the will in wickedness. In proportion as sin multiplies, the soul habituates herself, and becomes obdurate, so that nothing is able to soften her.

It would be incredible, if we did not daily evidently see it, how much those who are given to this sin, become void of sense or apprehension. They are found insensible of all good admonitions, deaf to all inspirations of grace; the menaces of divine justice and chastisements seem to them but a dream; witness *Lot's* two sons-in-law, to whom he seemed to speak as it were in jest, when he pressed them ‡, to depart from the city of *Sodom*, which the night following should be destroyed, as in effect it was, and they together with it. The examples of those whom God has so rigorously punished for this sin have no effect upon them; the misfortunes which they see with their eyes befalling others, make no impression on their minds; nothing is able to move them, so fatally has this brutal passion blinded them.

Sixth means, final impenitence. After all these sad effects of the sin of impurity, there remains one which fills up the measure of all the former, and to which they all tend, viz. final impenitence or spiritual death, which is the height of all misfortunes. It is the too common effect of this detestable sin, which incessantly fills hell with innumerable souls by the untimely death it brings on those who are plunged into this vice: some being surprized by a sickness, which deprives them of the time or means of doing penance; others by some frightful accident; others dying in obdurateness, abandoned by God at the hour of death, as they abandoned him during their lives. *The Lord*, says S. *Peter*, knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation; but to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be tormented with that fire which his justice has prepared for them; (hearken what follows) and especially them who walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness. But what will befall them? *These men, as irrational beasts, shall perish receiving the reward of injustice* §. Dear *Theotime*, is it possible that this oracle, pronounced by the Holy Ghost himself against impurity should not strike you with an horror of that detestable sin? Read it attentively, and preserve it in your memory; and that it may be more strongly settled in your mind, add to it the following examples.

ARTICLE

● Eccli. xxi. 18. † Chap. III. ‡ Gen. xix. 14. § 2 Pet. ii. 9, 10, 12, 13.

ARTICLE III.

Examples of the miserable death of those who were addicted to the sin of impurity.

THE sacred scripture furnishes a great number of them ; we have already mentioned some in Part I. Chap. 6. See what we have there related of the two sons of the patriarch *Juda*, who were punished by God with sudden death for the sins they committed by detestable actions of impurity.

The miserable death of the two sons of the high priest *Heli*, and all the other misfortunes which God inflicted upon that family, were not only punishments of their irreverence and injustice in the temple, but also of their impurity, as it is observed in the first book of *Kings* *.

Amnon the son of *David*, found the chastisement of his incestuous pleasures, in the dreadful death he received from the treacherous hands of own brother *Abolom*.

The rebellion of *Abolom* against his father, was not the sole cause for which God laid his avenging hand upon him ; the uncleanness he had committed, mentioned in the second book of *Kings* †, with his other crimes, contributed thereto.

What shall we say of *Solomon*, who being the wisest of men, singularly beloved by God, and visited with all desirable graces, but permitting himself to be unfortunately carried away with unchaste love, fell from that sin to the greatest of all crimes, that is, idolatry ; wherein he continued so long, that it is not known whether he ever abandoned it, and has left the world in doubt of his salvation ? Dreadful example ! Frightful effect of the sin of uncleanness !

If this sin has been so fatal to individuals, it has not spared multitudes, nor even the whole world.

That dreadful deluge, which drowned the whole earth sixteen hundred years after its creation, was the first effect of impurity, which had caused so prodigious a corruption in all human nature, that it provoked the divine wrath, even to destroy by an universal flood that same nature, the most excellent workmanship of his hands ; to extinguish in those waters the flames of that unchaste love, which had spread itself over the earth.

The waters of the deluge were scarce dried up, when this detestable sin beginning again to rekindle its first flames, moved the divine justice to send another frightful punishment upon those infamous cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* ; whose impurities being arrived at the greatest height, and crying to heaven for vengeance, God showered down in a conspicuous manner fire and brimstone, which reduced to ashes, not only the men and cities, but also all the neighbouring land, which is even to this day an infectious unwholesome marsh, to which no one dares to approach ; that it might serve

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* Chap. ii. 22. † Chap. xvi.

as an example to posterity, and teach the lewd, that the impure fire with which they permit themselves to be inflamed, shall be punished with another fire, which shall always burn and never be consumed.

To these examples, which are taken out of the sacred scripture, I might add many others which histories abundantly furnish. I shall content myself with two, which I have chosen from among others.

The first is related by St. *Gregory* in his dialogues*. He says, there was one in his time, named *Chrysofarius*, a man of quality, and very rich; yet as full of vices as he was wealthy in riches; but above all extremely addicted to carnal pleasures: God willed to put a period to the sins of this man which he daily heaped one upon another, sends him a severe sickness, of which he died, but in a very extraordinary manner. Approaching to his last moments, he suddenly perceived a multitude of evil spirits, who presented themselves to him in hideous forms, and made a shew as if they would immediately carry him into hell. He began to tremble, look aghast, and mournfully cry out for help; he turns himself on every side to avoid the sight of those horrid shapes; but which way soever he moves, they are continually before his eyes. After many a struggle, feeling himself surrounded and violently seized by those wicked spirits, he began horribly to cry out, *Truce till morning, Truce till morning*; and shrieking thus, his soul was torn from his body, and he made a fatal end without obtaining the truce he required.

If this example be terrible, the following is yet more frightful, and ought to affect you still more. It is related by *John Gerson*, Chancellor of *Paris*, who took it out of *Thomas Catapratensis*, suffragan bishop of *Cambray*, who says he was an eye-witness to it.

He says, that, whilst at school, he had contracted a very strict friendship with a fellow student, a person of quality, and endowed with all the virtues one could wish in a young man. Happy if he had preserved that treasure of innocence! But it happened by a misfortune too frequent among young persons, that he fell into wicked company, which kindled in his heart the fire of unchaste love: this in a short time banished all his good inclinations, and plunged him into the depth of vice. His irregularities became public, yet he continued this kind of life, notwithstanding the admonitions of his friends: and this author says, that he himself frequently exhorted him to return to the way from which he had departed. As he contemned all advice, God willed in his person to shew an example to young people, who permit themselves to be blindly carried away by this miserable sin, by the following dreadful accident. Being asleep at midnight, he was seized with a terrible fright, and awaking he began to cry out in a dreadful manner. The whole house alarmed come to his assistance. They ask what is his complaint, but can get no other answer from him than hideous outcries. They send for the priest,

* Lib. 4. Cap. 38.

priest, who exhorts him to think upon God, and beg pardon for his sins, but in vain. The priest continuing to exhort him with many moving expressions and tears, he turns towards him, and looking upon him with ghastly eyes, speaks thus to him in a lamentable voice: "Wo be to him that seduced me, Wo be to him that seduced me. It is in vain to invoke the grace of God, I see hell open ready to receive me."

After these words, which redoubled the lamentations of all present, every one entreating him to recommend himself to God, he turns to the other side, and continuing his clamours, miserably dies in despair.

Ought not this example to make all those tremble who are addicted to the sin of incontinency, and principally youth, who are here chiefly concerned? to teach them how they ought to avoid the company of those wretches, who corrupt the virtues of others.

A R T I C L E IV.

The first remedy against impurity is to resist this sin at the beginning.

AFTER having discovered the malice of this sin, I must shew the remedies, and afford you means by which you may preserve yourself from so great an enemy to your salvation.

The first is to resist it betimes, and in its first assaults, before it has gotten possession, and rendered itself master of your heart.

This, *Theotime*, is the great remedy against this sin, and principally in youth, wherein it is so necessary, that for want of practising it, the greatest part of young men are unhappily engaged in this vice, and oftentimes so deeply, that they are never able to free themselves, at least without very great difficulty.

For this reason the fathers have recommended it with much care, and more than any other.

"S. Cyprian (*de jejun.*) says, that we must resist the first temptations of the Devil; and to do otherwise is to cherish a snake which will become a dragon, able to devour him who harboured it."

S. Jerome* says, "that the Devil is a creeping serpent; and as to keep a serpent from entering into a hole, we hinder it from putting in its head, which being once entered, it cannot be stopped from introducing its whole body:" so to hinder the Devil from getting admittance into our soul by sin, we must resist the first temptations; which if not withstood, he insensibly creeps into the heart, and makes himself master of it.

St. Gregory† says, "that impurity is enkindled in the soul like fire among straw; and as if one does not quickly and entirely extinguish the fire, it burns all it meets with: so if the flame of incontinence be not carefully put out, it causes a fire in the soul, which is often without remedy."

St.

* In c. 9. Eccles. † In c. 25. 1 Kings.

St. Bernard * warns us to reject evil thoughts at the beginning, "and they will fly from you : Lascivious thoughts which are not resisted, cause delight, delight draws on consent, consent produces the act, from the act springs a habit, from a habit necessity, and from necessity death. And as the viper is killed by the young ones she carries in her womb ; so we receive death by our vicious thoughts, when we nourish them in our hearts."

The reason of this maxim being so much recommended by the saints, is, because it is easiest to resist the sin of impurity at the beginning, and very hard to surmount it when it becomes inveterate and strengthened by a long habit.

A R T I C L E V.

The second remedy ; to avoid the causes of impurity.

THE second remedy against the sin of impurity is to avoid carefully the causes, and occasions of it. This remedy is absolutely necessary ; it being certain, that to hinder the effect we must take away the cause ; he who puts himself in the occasion of evil, cannot avoid falling into it. *He that loveth danger, shall perish in it* †.

The first cause we must fly is *idleness*, the mother of all vices, but principally of this. It is idleness which opens the door to evil thoughts and immodest desires, which increase extremely in an idle mind, and occasion a vast number of sins. It is the sink and receptacle of impure temptations, according to St. Bernard. *Impurity*, says he, "quickly ensnares those it finds idle, and burns more violently those it finds lulled asleep in vice."

Be careful then, never to be idle, especially when you are alone.

The second cause of impurity is *intemperance* in eating and drinking, with which it is impossible to preserve chastity in whatsoever age, but principally in youth. The heat of blood which boils up in that age, excites them very much to sensual pleasures ; but when it is assisted by exterior causes, as wine and good cheer it blazes, out. Harken to what St. Jerome ‡ says, who speaks of it by his own experience. In his epistle to *Furia* he says, "That mount *Ætna*, and mount *Vesuvius*, and mount *Olympus*, which continually exhale fire and flames, did not burn with greater heat than the marrow of young people, when they are inflamed with wine and delicious meats. And in his epistle to *Eustochium*. If I be qualified, says he, to give any counsel, if you will give credit to one that is experienced ; I chiefly admonish and beseech that soul, which desires to be the spouse of *Jesus Christ* by preserving her purity, to fly from wine as a mortal poison. These are the first arms the Devil makes use of against youth. Wine and youth are a double incentive to pleasure ; why do we cast oil on the fire ? Why do we add more fuel to a body than is on fire ?" Behold, *Theotime*, the

* De inter. dono, c. 39. Eccli. iii. 27. † De virg. serv.

the advice of this great saint, so experienced in the conduct of souls, and chiefly of youth. Apply all your endeavours to practise it exactly, if you would preserve your chastity; and to do it well, see Part 4. Chap. 13. of Sobriety.

The third cause you ought carefully to avoid is *wicked company*, and all sort of loose discourse, or such as any way tend to immodesty. It is not to be imagined how those things corrupt and destroy chastity in young people: for how many are there who never fell into this dreadful sin, till they had learned it, either by conversation with dissolute persons, or by occasion of immodest discourse, which falling upon young minds, like a spark among straw, frequently inflames them with the fire of unchaste love. This cause is so common, and so pernicious to young people, that it cannot be too often repeated, nor ever sufficiently cried out to them. Fly wicked company, shut your ears to immodest discourse; or to use the words of the Apostle, *be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners* *.

The fourth cause is *familiar conversation with women*, which is also extremely dangerous. It is there, *Theotime*, the chastity of youth is utterly lost; and frequently, after it has been preserved from other dangers, it is there deplorably shipwrecked. Impure love enters but too easily into young minds; but when it is assisted by the presence of the object, it is inflamed beyond all imagination. For this reason the wise man gives us that important admonition, *Tarry not among women. For from garments cometh a moth, and from a woman the iniquity of a man* †.

Now if the company of women be very prejudicial to young people, it becomes pernicious to them, and absolutely mortal, when it passes to a familiarity, to a desire to please and be beloved, to indiscreet freedom, to caresses and demonstration of friendship, and such like fondnesses, too common amongst young persons, which St. *Jerome* calls very well "The forerunners to the approaching ruin of chastity."

We must add to this cause immodest or too curious looks, either in or out of conversation. Love enters by the eyes; and sometimes a look, without any evil design, draws after it a vast train of sins. *Gaze not upon a maiden, lest her beauty be a stumbling-block to thee. Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up, and gaze not about upon another's beauty. For many have perished by the beauty of a woman; and hereby lust is enkindled as a fire* ‡. What excellent advice! Yet as much unknown, as it is important. Engrave this deeply in your memory, and govern well your sight, for if it should happen to glance upon dangerous objects, at least fix it not there, but withdraw it immediately. Observe the same rule with respect to all pictures, or immodest figures, which are so many rocks for chastity to split upon, and wherewith the world unhappily abounds.

Add

* 1 Cor. xv. 33. † Eccli. xlii. 12, 13. ‡ Eccli. ix. 5, 8, 9.

Add also to the former causes, *kisses*, which amongst youth proceed often from sensuality and immodest affection, although it be sometimes concealed; at least they excite it, and give a beginning to many sins and uncleannesses. For this reason a good author calls them very properly "The bitings of the Devil, and an earnest
"of sin *."

Add also to these causes, *unchaste books*, which you ought to fly as the plague of the soul, and the certain corruption of chastity.

These are the most ordinary causes of impurity which you ought carefully to avoid, if you desire to be freed from their pernicious effect. To fly them to the purpose, and as you ought, *Theotime*, take notice of those you are subject to, and which keep you under their dominion; which when observed, avoid by all the means in your power. For example, if it be idleness, apply all your care to overcome it by labour. If it be intemperance, be sober in your diet, and observe some abstinence with the advice of your director.

A R T I C L E VI.

Other particular remedies against impurity.

YOU must not only fly the causes of impurity, you must likewise apply other remedies which are proper to cure and entirely overcome it. I shall give you these four, all which are not only most necessary against this sin, but very efficacious to preserve you from it.

One of these remedies is prayer, God is the author of purity; we must beg it of him, and the grace to resist the motions of that wretched concupiscence, which excites continual rebellions against the spirit. Ask it daily, *Theotime*, but not as St. *Augustin* † begged it in his youth, desiring chastity, yet afraid to obtain it; but beg it ardently, and with an earnest longing to acquire it from God. *Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels ‡.* If you pray for it, you will obtain it; and remember to recommend yourself to the Blessed Virgin, as we have said above, Part 2. Chap. 19.

Another remedy is *frequent confession*. This remedy is very necessary and efficacious against sins of impurity. Those who neglect it, never are cured; but such as make a right use of it, find great assistance in freeing themselves from this cursed vice. To shew the necessity of a wise guide against this sin, St. *Austin* deploring the disorders of his youth, which was involved in these crimes from the age of sixteen, laments that he had not then met with a discreet person, who might have rooted out his lascivious passions, which increased in his soul without number or measure. Your confessor, *Theotime*, will do you this good office. And St. *Jerome*, after he had related the method by which a superior of a monastery had deli-

vered

* Euseb. Emist. Hom. de Quadr. † L. 28. con. 7. ‡ Psalm l. 12.

vered a young man from violent temptations with which he was troubled, makes his reflection *. “If this young man had been alone, how could he have ever conquered these assaults?” You see by this, *Theotime*, how much the assistance of a discreet person is necessary in overcoming the sin of impurity.

The next remedy I shall assign is *reading and meditating* on pious things, which fill the mind with good thoughts, banish wicked ones, and fortify it in the time of temptations. Such are principally the thoughts of the grievousness of sin, of the justice of God, of his greatness, of his goodness, and other subjects, which you will find in the following chapter, Art. 3 the remembrance of death, of judgment, and of eternal torments. See also in the 2d Vol. on Contrition.

The last remedy I shall mention is *labour*. This helps to divert the mind from bad thoughts, and to take away from the flesh the opportunity of rebellion against reason. You will find by experience, that this is an excellent remedy if you carefully apply it. St. *Jerome* relates a very notable example of himself †, which may be of service to you. He says, that being a young man, shut up in the solitude of the wilderness, whither he retired for the practice of virtue, he could not support the heats of his youth, which caused continual and violent temptations; and though he repressed them with frequent fastings, his mind was still molested with impure thoughts: for the conquering of which he thought of a most efficacious means. He puts himself under the conduct of an *Hebrew* master, not disdaining even an alphabet, after studying the judicious rules of *Quintilian*, the eloquence of *Cicero*, the grave stile of *Fronto*, and the smoothness of *Pliny*. This study was attended with so much difficulty, that he frequently left off, despairing to be able to attain to his desire; yet afterwards he renewed his pains-owing to his solicitude for learning it. The assiduity of his labour was recompensed with the fruit he received from thence: for he here obtained what he sought for it, *viz.* the deliverance from his violent temptations, enjoying afterwards a sweet tranquillity. And “I give God thanks, says he, that from this bitter seed of study I now gather most pleasing fruits.” Behold, *Theotime*, what an effectual remedy labour is against the vice of impurity.

C H A P. IX.

Of temptations.

I TREAT here of temptations, because although one may be tempted to all sorts of sins, yet the temptations to impurity are more frequent, especially among youth, more difficult to encounter, and

* Ad Eustoch.

† Ep. ad Rust.

and become a greater obstacle to their salvation. For this reason it is highly necessary, that they should be well instructed how to resist and overcome them.

A R T I C L E I.

What temptation is, and of the means to know whether one hath sinned during a temptation.

What temptation is.

WE call temptation a proposal of sin made to the soul, to induce her to commit it, or rather a thought alluring to sin.

Sin may be consented to three ways.

Now the soul may consent to sin three ways. 1. By actually doing it. 2. In not performing, but desiring to perform it. 3. Neither performing nor desiring, but taking pleasure or delight in thinking on the sin. In other words, the will may consent to sin by the action, by the desire, and by complacency or wilful delectation. From hence arise two things which ought to be well taken notice of.

1. That there is nothing but consent which causes the sin, and by consequence the thought alone of a sin, is not a sin, as long as the will does not consent in one of those three ways; and although the thought should continue a long time, it is not a sin without consent; but, on the contrary, it is meritorious to reject it.

2. To know whether we have sinned mortally in a temptation, it is not sufficient to consider whether we have done a wicked action, or desired it; but we must take notice whether we have wilfully taken pleasure in thinking on it: For the voluntary thinking with pleasure on a mortal sin, is a mortal sin. This must be well observed, because many deceive themselves therein, and believe they have not consented to a temptation, unless they desired the evil to which they were tempted.

Nevertheless, one thing is here to be observed, viz. that there are two sorts of delight in temptation; the one which precedes the consent which is that one feels in the beginning of the temptation, and which draws the will to consent. The other which follows the consent, and it is that which the will takes in the thing proposed. This second delight is a sin, because voluntary; but not the first, which is not voluntary.

Wherefore, to see whether you have sinned by delectation in an evil thought, you must know whether you gave consent to it. And because an action cannot be voluntary, except knowledge went before, to judge whether you consented to that delectation, you must take notice whether you perceived it, and how you behaved yourself after you reflected on it, viz. whether you continued to entertain yourself therewith or not; for if you continued in it, it

is voluntary, and you must have sinned. And this sin was either mortal or venial: mortal, if you continued with a deliberate will, or by a voluntary and affected negligence. Venial, if that continuation was through inadvertence, and without an entire consent, not desiring really to please yourself therein, and yet also not using necessary endeavours to reject it.

ARTICLE II.

That one cannot avoid being tempted, and that we must be prepared betimes to resist temptations.

SON, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice, and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation*. It is a certain maxim, that we cannot live here without temptations. This life is a perpetual combat, according to that which the scripture affirms: *The life of man upon earth is a warfare*†. We have enemies which assault us on every side, within and without, visible and invisible. The world and exterior things furnish us with continual occasions of sin. The disorder of concupiscence perpetually rebels against the spirit. The Devil, who watches night and day for our destruction, employs all his forces to make us fall into it.

Now if this common enemy conspires generally the ruin of all men, it is certain he applies most vigorously the violence of his temptations against those, who withdraw themselves from him to serve their Creator, according to the observation of the fathers, St. Leo, St. Gregory, &c. And, among those, he attacks most strongly young people, whom he endeavours to withdraw from the service of God, that he may render their ruin certain and inevitable.

Hence you must not wonder if you meet with frequent temptations, nor lose patience under them; they are unavoidable in a Christian life. Temptations are often the effects of vicious habits contracted by former sins; sometimes they spring from the occasions unto which you voluntarily and by your own fault expose yourself. In these two causes you have no reason to complain but of yourself. Without these two causes your age will lead you into many temptations: the enemy will not let you rest; or if he do, it is but to surprise you more easily. You must therefore dispose yourself courageously for the combat, and prepare the necessary arms to defend yourself in that warfare. Have a good heart then, you will not be alone in this combat; God will be there with you, to assist you to gain the victory, and, with the victory, great advantages for your salvation.

We must not be impatient in temptations.

For these temptations serve, 1. To keep you humble, and in the fear of falling into sin, and always to make you stand upon your guard by

Three great benefits from temptations.

prayer,

* Eccli. ii. 1. † Job vii. 1.

prayer, and other necessary means. 2. To confirm you more in virtue, and daily to advance therein: for every resistance you make to temptation, is a renewing and confirmation of the firm resolution you have made not to offend God any more upon any account whatsoever, and it merits new grace from God to resist temptations for the future. 3. These temptations tend to secure your salvation, and increase your glory in heaven.

A R T I C L E III.

Considerations to fortify the mind in temptations.

TEMPTATION being a thought alluring to sin, the first remedy is to furnish the mind with contrary thoughts, which may divert it from the sin to which it is solicited. See here some of the most powerful, which will be able to raise a horror of sin in you, if you consider them attentively. Wherefore when you shall be tempted, and principally if the temptation be strong and obstinate, make one or more of these reflections.

1. What are you going to do? You are going by one action, and in a moment to lose the grace of God, to make yourself his enemy, unworthy of all his favours, the object of hatred and indignation: you are going to renounce heaven, to lose all the good you have ever done, to render yourself a slave to the Devil, and subject to eternal damnation.

2. But for what are you about to expose yourself to so many evils? For the deceitful satisfaction of a wicked thought, of an unchaste desire, of a disgraceful action, which will make you like a brute, but is unworthy of a man: a pleasure which will last but a moment, and being past, leaves nothing behind but sorrow, vexation and remorse of conscience, which will incessantly haunt you. Do you act like a man in his reason when you make such a choice?

3. Consider the dignity of him you are about to offend: you offend God infinite in power, in greatness, in majesty, in holiness. God, whom all creatures adore, in whose presence the angels tremble: you are going to revolt from him, to cast off the yoke of his obedience, and say rebel like, *I will not serve* *. Wretched man, despicable creature! You are going to fly in the face of your Creator. What a crime is this! Do you understand, *Theotime*, that the injury you offer to God by one mortal sin is so great, that you deserve that instant to be plunged into everlasting flames!

4. If you could conceal your sin from God, and not offend him in his presence, you would be less blameable; but you offend him before his face, knowing that he sees you, and looks upon the sin you are about to commit with detestation. What greater affront can you offer him than this? You would blush for shame, if you should think

* Jerem. ii. 20.

think yourself seen by a man in this action, and are you under no confusion at being seen by God himself; and at doing that in his adorable presence, which you would be ashamed to do in the presence of the meanest mortal? Can you show a greater disrespect to God than this! If you will offend God, seek at least a place where he is not; and if you cannot find it, be ashamed to let that holy and adorable eye see you in your sin: and be afraid to commit a crime before the face of him who is at the same time both *witness and judge*, and who could strike you dead the moment you have committed it.

5. Turn your eyes upon the goodness of him you are going to offend. Who is it that you offend? Nothing less than your celestial Father, who has made you what you are, who has given you all that you possess, who preserves you incessantly, and without whose assistance you could not move a hand. You breathe only by the air he gives you; and if he should abandon you but one moment, you would instantly fall into nothing. Look upon yourself from head to foot, and you will find nothing but what comes from God; yet in the midst of all these favours and benefits you dare criminally to offend him, despising the goodness of so liberal a God, the love of so kind a Father, and making use of his own blessings against himself. Go, you ungrateful and degenerate child, more cruel than beasts! Tigers have a love for him that feeds them, and you fear not to offend the author of all the good you have.

Lastly, strive to fortify yourself against temptation, by contemplating the passion of his Son *Jesus Christ*, which is the master piece of his love; here you will find wherewith entirely to break the attempts of the most violent temptations, more than any where else. Cast your eyes upon your Saviour nailed upon the cross, covered with wounds, overwhelmed with grief, dying for your salvation. Fix there your mind and thoughts; consider, meditate attentively all that he suffered; remember that it was for you, and for the sins you have committed, that he suffered in such a manner, and see whether you have a heart hard and cruel enough to resolve to offend against a God dying for your salvation, and crucify him a-new by mortal sin. If the sight of a God crucified for your sins be not able to hinder you from offending him, will not the blood he shed for your salvation soften your heart? Will not all the pains he endured for you have force to make you love him? All the wounds he received are so many mouths and voices, crying out: A horror of sin, a love of *Jesus*; and can you behold him without either having a horror of sin, which crucified *Christ Jesus*, or a love for *Jesus Christ* crucified for your sins? O *Jesus*, permit it not, but cause, by thy goodness, that the sole thought of thy death so touch our hearts in temptation, that it raise in us a horror of sin, and make us resolve to chuse rather to die than offend him again, who died for the love of us.

ARTICLE IV.

How we must behave in temptations.

FROM the moment you perceive yourself assaulted with a temptation entering your mind, be careful readily to reject it without dwelling thereon ever so little; it is the chief remedy given by the holy fathers, and particularly by St. *Jerome* *.

Now that you may thus stifle temptations in their birth, remember to perform two things. 1. Raise your mind to God, and protest unto him that you renounce the temptation with all your heart, and will not consent to it: beg of him the assistance of his grace to resist it, often making the sign of the cross on your heart, to drive from thence the enemy of your salvation. It is incredible, *Theotime*, how powerful prayer is in the moment of temptation, especially when joined with a perfect confidence in the divine help, ready to assist you in the hour of danger. 2. After that elevation of your mind, divert yourself by applying your thoughts to something, as work, reading, talking, recreation, or other like thing, which may keep your mind employed, and you will find by experience that the temptation oftentimes without trouble will vanish.

If it continues to return, persevere in employing these two means; pray with more fervour, protest that you will not consent, proceed in entertaining your mind with something else. If you be all alone, it will be good to stir up yourself by some exterior action of devotion, as to raise your eyes or hands towards heaven, smite your breast, cast yourself on your knees to ask of God the grace to resist. See the example of St. *Jerome*, Art. 8. It would also be of advantage to terrify yourself with the remembrance of death, with the thoughts of God's judgments and of eternal damnation, according to that important advice of the wise man, *Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin* †.

An important advice.

Be sure not to dwell upon the temptation itself, but apply your mind to think upon the motives which deter you. For this end, especially when the temptation continues a long time, endeavour to reflect upon one or more of the former considerations, and after you have weighed them well, make a final resolution never to consent thereto, although it should return a thousand times.

Another advice, to make use of the temptation, as a motive to some virtuous action.

Not to content yourself with rejecting a temptation, but to take an occasion from thence of performing some act of piety, is also a most effectual remedy against it. For example, on the day you have been tempted, apply yourself more to prayer than ordinarily, read some pious books,

* Ep. ad Eustochium 22.

† Eccli. vii. 40.

book, mortify yourself, give some alms to the poor; and above all, in the time of temptation, exercise some act of virtue, as detesting sin, loving God with all your heart, protesting you will never offend him. By this means you will defeat your enemy with his own arms; and he seeing that, instead of moving you to sin by his temptations, he gives you occasion to practise virtue, will desist from tempting you, fearing to advance your salvation by the same means he employed to destroy you.

But above all, *Theotime*, be careful when you resist a temptation, not to confide in your own strength; but to expect all from the grace of God. This is the best means of subduing temptations, humbly acknowledging that you can do nothing of yourself without the help of divine grace. By how much more you disside in your own strength, putting your confidence only in God, by so much more easily will you surmount them. "See, says St. *Augustin* *, little *David* combating *Goliath*. He was a youth without force, without arms, who encountered a giant armed from head to foot; but because he put all his confidence in God, he gained the victory. *Thou comest to me* (said *David* to *Goliath*) *with a sword and with a spear, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts* †; and in that confidence he overthrew him at the first stroke. Thus must you encounter with the enemy of your salvation. He (says St. *Augustin*) who trusts in his own strength, is overcome before he fights."

Now the principal means to obtain many helps from God in temptation are prayer, and frequenting the sacraments of confession and communion, which have a wonderful efficacy against temptations, and without which it is morally impossible to resist any long time.

ARTICLE V.

Of some artifices by which the Devil deceives men, especially youth, in temptations.

ALL the force of the Devil in temptations consists only in craft and deceit; wherefore the best way to resist him is to know the tricks he usually employs.

The first is, that by which he hinders them from knowing or considering the evil which is in the sin they are going to commit; on the contrary, he represents in lively colours the pleasure of sin, which he always makes them think far greater than it is, as well as the trouble and difficulty of resisting and abstaining from it, which he makes them believe insurmountable.

VOL. I.

I

Who

* Serm. 4. de Verb. Apost.

† Kings xvii. 45.

The deceit of this artifice. Who does not see how great the illusion is in all these three things ? For the evil which is in sin is the greatest of all misfortunes, as we have said above, Art. 3. The pleasure of sin is but for a moment, and is followed by vexation, sadness, and despair. The trouble of resistance continues not long, and a sweet and pleasing consolation follows it ; it merits heaven, and frequently the deliverance from many other temptations.

The remedy. Permit not yourself to be thus abused by the enemy of your salvation : when he shall propose a temptation to you, consider the evil you are going to do, which is a mortal sin, the greatest of all evils. Think not on the pleasure that is offered, which will pass like a shadow, but upon the sorrow and displeasure it brings after it. Regard not the pain and difficulty of resistance, but the joy and consolation you will receive from your victory. If you act thus, you will find that the temptation will soon vanish.

Second artifice. The second deceit by which the Devil seduces young people, is to propose, during the temptation, the easiness of pardon, and persuade them that they will do penance, and confess it to a Priest. How frequently, *Theotime*, does it fall out, alas ! too often, that in the combat of temptation, the conscience resisting on her side by the good motions God gives her, this unhappy thought comes into the mind, I will do penance for it : and with this thought one unhappily resolves to commit this sin. What ! if you imagined that God presently after the sin would cast you into the pit of hell, you would not offend him ; and because you hope he will pardon you, you do not scruple to displease him. What impiety is this ! Will you be impious because God is good ? Do you offend him because he will pardon you ? If ever this thought comes into your mind, reject it as a blasphemy, and as wile of the Devil, by which he would plunge you into the abyss of sin.

Third artifice. The third deceit of the Devil towards young persons, is, that after he has made them sometimes yield to his temptations by the former artifices, he puts into their minds this false and wicked notion, that it is impossible to resist temptations, and to abstain from sin ; that, being thus persuaded, they may make no endeavours to resist them, but give themselves up to evil without any restraint.

The falseness of this persuasion. Detestable persuasion ! diabolical invention ! which is so much the more deplorable, as it is most false and pernicious, yet most common amongst youth. Insensible creatures ! what is it that dazzles you thus, so that you cannot see the truth more clear than day ? Do you not see how injurious this thought is to the mercy of your Saviour, who has shed his blood to merit for you grace to resist on these occasions, and who stretches out his arms to assist you ? This persuasion

persuasion comes not from him who calls you to himself to save you, but from the Devil, who seeks to destroy you past recovery.

Permit not yourself to be seduced by this execrable thought, but in the midst of the most violent temptations call to mind the mercy of your Saviour, who never abandons those who hope in him. *The remedies.* They, says the wise man, *compassed me on every side, and there was no one that would help me. I remembered thy mercy, O Lord, how thou deliverest them that wait for thee. And thou hast saved me from destruction **.

These are the three most ordinary artifices the Devil makes use of against young persons in temptations, and all three are pursued in order. First, he hides from them the evil, and makes them believe it is not so great as in reality it is. Next, he persuades them that they may easily free themselves from it. And lastly, when he has them deeply engaged, he makes the difficulty of refraining to appear very great, that they may not attempt to deliver themselves from it. Reflect well upon these three artifices, and have a care not to be deluded by them.

A R T I C L E VI.

Of two considerable faults usual with young persons in temptations.

BESIDES the fault they commit, who permit themselves to be deceived by the three former artifices, they fall into two others much more dangerous.

The first is, that when they see themselves attacked by frequent temptations, they presently become impatient, and after having resisted a while, lose courage, and yield to the enemy, believing that they cannot resist him any longer. This error is very common among young people, and it gives a great advantage to the enemy of their salvation over them. *First fault.*

When the city of *Bethulia* in *Judea* was besieged by *Holofernes*, the heads of the town, with all the people, betook themselves to their prayers, to obtain of God their deliverance; and seeing God did not hear them so soon as they expected, they resolved to deliver themselves up, if succour did not come in five days. The courageous *Judith* hearing of this resolution, disapproved of it much, and sharply reprehended them, saying, *Who are you that tempt the Lord? This is not a word that may draw down mercy, but rather that may stir up wrath, and enkindle indignation. You have set a time for the mercy of the Lord, and you have appointed him a day, according to your pleasure. But for as much as the Lord is patient let us be patient for this same thing, and with many tears let us beg his pardon. Let us humbly wait for his consolation †.*

I 2

I say

* Eccl. li. 10, 11, 12, 16. † Judith viii. 11, 12, 13, 14, 20.

I say the same to you, dear *Theotime*, when losing patience in temptations, and despairing to be able to resist them, you take a resolution at length to deliver yourself over to your enemy, by which conduct you offer a great injury to God; for this is to distrust his grace, and dispose of it as you please: this is not the means to obtain it, but, on the contrary, by this diffidence you render yourself more unworthy of his mercy, are at a greater distance from his grace, and expose yourself to more grievous temptations, and to fall into sin without resistance. No, no, you must not act thus, you must have patience in temptations, and humbly expect the divine grace, which will never fail you, except you be wanting to it first. If you persevere courageously to resist, he will either deliver you from the temptations, or give you grace to overcome. Remember that the greatest saints have been tempted like you, and much more: call to mind the apostle *St. Paul*, who having begged of God to be delivered from great temptations, received this answer from him: *My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity* *.

The second fault young persons commit in temptations, is, that when they once happen to yield to the enemy, they lose courage, lay down

their arms, and permit themselves to be overcome by all other temptations, without any resistance. What a strange blindness is this, for being once conquered, to submit entirely to the enemy; after having received some wounds, to be content to receive many more; after having lost the grace of God, to continue to provoke more and more his fury, instead of readily appeasing it by penance! Can any thing be more opposite to reason and common sense?

The *Israelites* being assembled to fight against the tribe of *Benjamin*, to revenge a most enormous crime committed by some of that tribe, although they were more numerous, they were defeated in the first and second battle. These two overthrows highly astonished them, nevertheless they lost not courage; they came before the tabernacle of God, and there they set themselves to weep, to fast, to make their supplications, and offer sacrifices to appease the divine anger. This being done, they took their arms again, and courageously returned to battle, where they gained the victory, and entirely defeated their enemies †.

This, *Theotime*, is exactly what you must do in the combat of temptations; you must not be discouraged for being once conquered, but cheerfully rise again: you must have recourse to God, lament your misery, beg pardon of him, appease his anger, implore the assistance of his Grace, and after having done penance for your sins, re-assume your arms in the name of God, and fight more courageously than before. The sorrow for being vanquished ought to excite you to resist your enemy more resolutely, and your defeat should make you stand better upon your guard for the future. Do so then dear *Theotime*, and be punctual in following this advice, if you should be so unhappy as to fall into sin.

ARTICLE

* 2 Cor. xii. 9. † Jud. xx.

A R T I C L E VII.

What is to be done after the temptation is overcome.

WE ordinarily commit two faults after we are delivered from a temptation. The first is, we give not thanks to God for the victory we have gained by the assistance of his grace. The second, we make no preparation to resist future temptations. These two defects are the cause why we easily fall into other temptations, and are at length overcome by them. The first, because God would have us acknowledge his favours, especially great ones, such as a victory over temptation. The second, because he who doth not stand upon his guard, is soon surprised by his enemy.

1. It is therefore most important, *The time,* when you have surmounted a temptation, that you take care to give God thanks for it, either immediately after the temptation, or at least at the end of the day in your evening prayers. Return him thanks with all your heart for this victory, acknowledge that it comes from him alone, and not from yourself, and that without him you had been a thousand times vanquished.

2. Prepare yourself to resist temptations for the future. 1. Making a firm protestation to God, to resist them with all your power. 2. Humbly begging the continuance of his assistance. 3. Resolving to make use of such and such means as you know to be useful.

If it happen that you remain some time without temptation, consider not too much in this peace and tranquillity: "for it frequently happens, as St. Gregory observes *, that the enemy permits those whom he has much tempted, to continue some time in quiet, that he may surprise them more easily, when they think least of him, and make them fall into sin by a sudden and violent temptation." For this reason stand always upon your guard, asking daily of God grace to resist the assaults of the enemy. Be careful to remove quickly from your mind all the first thoughts that may move you to sin, as we have said before, Art. IV.

A R T I C L E VIII.

A remarkable example to teach us how we must encounter temptations.

AN ancient author † says very well, "that the way to learn by precept is very long, but that by example is much shorter and most efficacious." Wherefore it will be much to the purpose, to set here before your eyes some of those who have courageously resist-

* 3 Mor. 16. † Seneca. Epist. 6.

ed temptations, that their example may stir up your courage, and teach you how to manage the arms with which they have happily overcome.

Amongst many others, I have chosen out of the great St. *Jerome*, whom I would propose to you for a model and example. He was young, as you are, at the time of these temptations; he was more tempted than ever you will be, and perhaps of all the servants of God, his youth was most tried by temptations. He encountered them with an admirable perseverance, from whence he gained most glorious victories. I shall give you his own relation of it: read it attentively, and mark well all the circumstances.

This saint being yet young, after he had spent some time in a worldly life, was moved with a desire of serving God, and labouring for his salvation by a true conversion. He takes a resolution to leave the world, and to retire into some wilderness to do penance, and apply himself entirely to virtue. He went first to *Jerusalem*, to visit the holy places, and from thence he retired into the desert.

He continued in that place four years, during which, notwithstanding the incredible austerities he underwent, he was assaulted with continual and so great temptations as must affect those who read them. Behold what he says, writing to Eustochium*.

“ In the remotest part of a wild and sharp desert, which being
 “ burnt up with the heats of the scorching sun, strikes with horror
 “ and terror even the monks that inhabit it, I seemed to myself to
 “ be in the midst of the delights and assemblies of Rome. I loved
 “ solitude, that in the bitterness of my soul, I might more freely
 “ bewail my miseries, and call upon my Saviour. My hideous
 “ emaciated limbs were covered with sackcloth: My skin was
 “ parched dry and black, and my flesh was almost wasted away.
 “ The days I passed in tears and groans, and when sleep overpower-
 “ ed me against my will, I cast my wearied bones, which hardly
 “ hung together, upon the bare ground, not so properly to give
 “ them rest, as to torture myself. I say nothing of my eating and
 “ drinking; for the monks in that desert, when they are sick, know
 “ no other drink but cold water, and look upon it as sensuality ever
 “ to eat any thing dressed by fire. In this exile and prison, to which
 “ for the fear of hell I had voluntarily condemned myself, having
 “ no other company but scorpions and wild beasts, I many times
 “ found my imagination filled with lively representations of dances
 “ in the company of Roman ladies, as if I had been in the midst
 “ of them. My face was pale with fasting; yet my will felt vio-
 “ lent assaults of irregular desires. In my cold body, and in my
 “ parched up flesh, which seemed dead before its death, concupi-
 “ scence was able to live.”

See the temptations which this saint endured, and the rude assaults he sustained; but consider how this generous champion behaved himself.

“ Though

* Epist. 22. de. Virgin. c. 3.

“ Though I vigorously repressed all its sallies, it strove always to rise again, and to cast forth more violent and dangerous flames. Finding myself abandoned as it were to the power of this enemy, I threw myself in spirit at the feet of Jesus, watering them with my tears, and I tamed my flesh by fasting whole weeks. I am not ashamed to disclose my temptations, but I grieve that I am not now what I then was. I often joined whole nights to the days, crying, sighing and beating my breast till the desired calm returned. I feared the very cell in which I lived, because it was witness to the foul suggestions of my enemy; and being angry and armed with severity against myself, I went alone into the most secret parts of the wilderness, and if I discovered any where a deep valley or a craggy rock, that was the place of my prayer, there I threw this miserable sack of my body.”

What an example, *Theotime*, is this, to teach you how to encounter temptations! But hearken yet to what follows.

“ The same Lord is my witness, that after many sobs and tears, after having in much sorrow looked long up to heaven, I felt most delightful comforts and interior sweetness; and these so great, that, transported and absorpt, I seemed to myself to be amidst the choirs of angels: and glad and joyful I sung to God: *After thee, O Lord, we will run in the fragrancy of thy celestial ointments* *.”

What an example, *Theotime*, is this, to animate you to encounter the temptations of youth! O how admirable and instructive is this for you, and all those of your age! For among others it teaches you three things of great importance. 1. That you ought not to be astonished to see yourself tempted, since this holy saint in his youth, notwithstanding all his mortifications, and removed from all occasions of sin, suffered a long time so great temptations. 2. It will teach you how to fight against temptations, viz. by mortifications, and above all by humble fervent, and persevering prayer. And in the third place, you there learn the greatness of the joy God gives to those who have resisted temptations with much courage and perseverance.

Three things to be learnt from Saint Jerome.

Set this excellent example often before your eyes. When you shall be tempted, represent unto yourself St. *Jerome* in the desert, encountering his temptations with tears, with prayers, with mortification, casting himself at the feet of *Jesus Christ*, and imporing his assistance. Imitate him, let your closet be a solitude, where you will receive God's assistance against temptations; and be assured, that after your prayer God will send you tranquillity, and make you feel an incredible joy and consolation, which will animate you anew to resist temptations, and serve your Saviour more faithfully than ever.

Practice.

CHAP.

C H A P. X.

Obstacles peculiar to rich young persons.

THE obstacles we have spoken of hitherto, are common to all youth of whatever quality or condition. But because, among the several conditions of life, there are some which are attended with particular obstacles, it is proper to treat briefly of them. These conditions are chiefly riches, and nobility.

As for riches, there is no question but they are a particular obstacle to salvation, since the Son of God assures us, that they choke the seed of the word of God in souls, and hinder it from taking root, and bringing forth fruit *, which is true, not only of men already advanced in age, in whom covetousness and the love of riches too often prevail, but also in young men, to whom the possession of riches is frequently a hinderance to salvation.

This is confirmed by experience, which evinces, that rich young people are frequently more vicious than others. We see them addicted to pleasure, slothful, and averse to labour, their minds always taken up with vanity, aspiring after greatness, fortune, and the riches of the world, proud, presumptuous, despising others, untractable, and resisting the most salutary instruction and advice, subject to much vice, oftentimes malicious and ingenious in committing sin. And, on the contrary, we see young persons of low condition or small fortune, live in the fear of God, desirous of securing their salvation and advancing in virtue, laborious, seeking good instructions, and receiving them with joy and much fruit, flying from sin, or recovering instantly, if they happen to fall into it. And by this means they heap the blessings of God upon themselves; for God is pleased to favour the humble, and those who fear him, as, on the contrary, he rejects the proud, and those that trust in their own strength, and glory in the multitude of their riches †.

I say this, *The time*, to warn you, that, if God has pleased that you should be born in opulence, take you care lest your riches become the occasion of your damnation, as they do daily to many; the multitude whereof makes but too evident that truth, *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God ‡?* Wherefore perform three things.

1. Be fully persuaded that your riches will obstruct your salvation, unless you both employ them to advantage, and preserve yourself from their dangerous temptations.

2. Endeavour to understand what these are, that you may diligently avoid them. There are many, such as pride, untractableness, idleness, love of pleasures, vicious company, flattery, &c.

Be humble in your riches, remembering what St. *Austin* § says, “that they occasion haughtiness; that as every sort of fruit has its

“par-

* Luke viii. 14.
verb. Domini.

† Psalm xlviii. 6.

‡ Luc. xviii. 24.

§ Serm. 5. de

“particular worm, pride is the worm of riches.” In order to humble this pride, consider on the one side the danger they daily put you in of offending God, and losing your soul; and on the other side, the rigorous account you must render to God of the good use you have made of them. Wherefore do you glory in the riches you possess, which God can take away in a moment? and with which, as the wise man says *, you cannot obtain true riches, that is, wisdom and virtue, which if you possess not, you, with all your goods, are but like a horse richly caparisoned, which with all his ornaments is but a beast without reason.

Become docile and tractable; be ready to learn, and willing to be reprehended; and be assured, that the more noble and rich you are, the better you ought to be instructed, because you are so much the more exposed, and your faults are so much the more fatal than those of others.

Fly idleness, so natural to the rich. Remember that the rich are not in the labour of men: neither shall they be scourged like other men †. Hence St. Bernard ‡ adds, “There is great reason to fear, that they will be afflicted with the Devils.”

Carefully avoid a voluptuous life, which is a great incentive to impurity. Remember that chastity is in the midst of dangers and precipices, whilst surrounded with riches, where an affected niceness as to diet, cloaths, sleeping, and a thousand other occasions expose it to inevitable ruin, if not withstood with the utmost precaution. *Wo be to you that are wealthy in Sion,* (says the prophet Amos) *you that sleep upon beds of ivory, and are wanton on your couches: that eat the lambs out of the flock, &c. that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the best ointments: and they are not concerned for the affliction of Joseph §.* *Wo to you that are rich: for you have your consolation ¶.*

Withdraw yourself from wicked company, which your riches will easily attract, as a prey invites birds.

Permit not yourself to be deceived by flattery, which always smiles upon the rich, and too often perverts their minds, especially youth, according to St. Jerome ||. Give not credit to any thing they shall say in your commendation; for either they commend you for things that deserve not praise, as your condition, your wealth, your good behaviour, or the like; or else for things you have not, as science, wisdom, virtue; or if you have them, they come not from you. To value yourself on the first, is vanity; on the second, folly; on the third, injustice: for you appropriate to yourself a glory due only to God.

3. There remains the third thing required for preventing the danger to which riches will expose your salvation, that is, to make good use of them. This is what St. Paul ordered Timothy to prescribe to the rich: *Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded, nor to trust*

* Prov. xvii. † Pl. lxxii. 5. ‡ Serm. ad Pastores. § Amos vi. 1, 4, 5.
¶ Luke vi. 24. || Epist. ad Celerianum.

trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, (who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy.) To do good, to be rich in good works, to give easily, to communicate to others, to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the true life.* This is the use of riches, which the Holy Ghost prescribes to the wealthy, and which you ought exactly to practise, if you would prevent their becoming your ruin. Keep in your mind that great truth St. Cyprian teaches you, that "a great patrimony is a temptation, if the revenue one possesses be not employed in pious uses; and the more a person abounds in wealth, the more carefully should he employ it, not to multiply, but to redeem his sins †."

C H A P. XI.

Obstacles peculiar to gentry.

TO number gentility among the obstacles of virtue, were to offer an injury to it; yet we shall not deviate from truth, if we say that the ill conduct of persons of rank is a great impediment to their salvation, and frequently the cause of their ruin and damnation.

To see this truth, and clearly to shew that there is no state generally more corrupt and vicious, than that of people of distinction, we need only reflect a little on the life they lead.

They affect so much pride, that they condemn all the world, and esteem all others infinitely below them. They are slaves to ambition. They are extravagantly addicted to pleasures, effeminate, bold and shameless in publishing their sins, and glorying in them, envious in the highest degree, attached to self-interest, affectionate to none but themselves, unjust, violent, harsh, and often cruel towards others, especially their inferiors, impatient and passionate, addicted to swearing and blasphemies, revengeful even to excess, not being able to suffer or dissemble the least injury, which frequently is grounded only in their imagination, and even make open profession of never submitting to or dissembling any. What a life is this for men who make profession of the Christian religion!

What adds much to the danger of this condition of life is, that detestable passion for duels, which so over-rules them, that there is scarce a moment in their life, wherein they are not resolved to fight upon the first injury, or at least upon the first challenge; a resolution which continually keeps them in mortal sin. Not to mention the contempt of religion, sensuality and impiety, which are much encouraged by the rich, especially in these our days, where so many are found to say to God, with the impious:

Depart

* 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19. † St. Cyp. lib. de habitu Virginum.

Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Who is the Almighty that we should serve him? And what doth it profit to us if we pray to him.*

Is not this a thing much to be deplored, to see in the midst of Christianity, the fairest part of the Christian world most corrupted? And that the dignity of birth which is given as a reward and encouragement to virtue, should become the source of vice and depravity in those who possess it? so that it is a mark of reprobation to many, who, it were to have been wished, had been born in a lower condition of life. "For what advantage is it to be great before men, and "contemptible in the sight of God†? To be honoured by men and "hated by God? To command others, and to be a slave to vice "and his own passions?" And in a word, to be happy in this world, and damned for ever, being of the number of those who eternally cry out, *What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth‡.*

Dear *Theotime*, if you be a person of distinction, I beseech you to reflect seriously on yourself, and on the danger to which your rank exposes your salvation. Distrust your state, and be afraid lest it ruin you. In proportion as you are raised in condition, your obligation to be virtuous, and the danger of your perdition encrease with your dignity. Labour earnestly for your salvation, and use all possible diligence that your rank be not a cause of your damnation, as it is to many. For this effect, practise the following advices:

1. Understand perfectly what true gentility is. Gentility is inseparable from virtue, it *First advice.* takes its origin from thence, and is only preserved by it. It has been bestowed upon your ancestors, in recompense of their worthy actions; if you imitate them in their virtue, you will merit the title of Gentlemen; if you imitate them not, you are only possessed of a false and imaginary gentility.

2. Know, that besides this distinction instituted by men, there is a divine one infinitely *Second advice.* superior, which is that acquired by grace. For if gentility consists in being born of illustrious parents, and of those that are considerable in the world, what will it be to be made the child of God, coheir of *Jesus Christ*, designed for the possession of the kingdom of heaven? This, *Theotime*, is the great, the prime and true gentility; if you possess this, you are really distinguished; and if you have it not, how noble soever you may be before men, you are most infamous and abominable in the sight of God.

3. Wherefore permit not yourself to be puffed up with pride and arrogance on account of *Third advice.* your rank. "That is a wicked gentility (says "St. *Austin* §) which makes you contemptible in the sight of God "by

* Job xxi. 14. 15. † Euseb. Emill. Hom. 3. de Pascale. ‡ Wisd. v. 8, 9, 10. § Serm. 27.

“by its pride.” On the contrary, be so much more humble, as you are the greater, according to the precept of the wise man; *the greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God* *. It is an excellent advice which St. Jerome gives to noblemen: “Prefer not yourself before others by reason of your nobility, and contemn not those who are not noble. Our religion hath no respect to persons, it regards not the condition of men, but their minds; it judgeth of nobility by their manners. There is no liberty in the sight of God, but not to serve sin. The height of nobility is to be illustrious in virtue †.”

4. Endeavour to observe well the ordinary vices of those of your rank, that you may carefully avoid them; be sure to withstand them in good time, begging daily of God for this effect the assistance of his grace. Remember that the justice of God will be severe towards the great and noble, and their sins will be punished more rigorously than those of others, as it is said in the book of *Wisdom* ‡.

5. Make your rank assist in advancing virtue. *Fifth advice.* You will say, how can this be? See how. If being noble you be virtuous, first your virtue will be in some manner more agreeable to God, according to the judgment of St. Bernard §. Besides, your example will move others to virtue, your discourse will have more authority to persuade them to good; they will give credit to you, when you mildly reprehend their faults. You will have means of comforting the afflicted, and relieving the oppressed; you may often compose differences, and reconcile enemies.

6. Arm yourself particularly against the tyranny of duels, by a firm resolution never to fight one. For this end, 1. Beg of God the grace to renounce from your heart that height of infatuation, and never to yield to it. 2. Be convinced that a duel is a wicked action, that it is a crime as great as murder is enormous. Remember how murder is detested by the Almighty: it is a crime which destroys the image of God, and the work of his hands; God has it in such abhorrence, that he declares the person not to be pardoned who is guilty of it: *Whosoever, says he, shall shed man's blood, his blood shall be shed: for man was made to the image of God* ||. He threatens to extend his revenge thereof even to a beast, which should take away a man's life, to evince what a horror he has for murder. From this form a judgment of the quality of a duel, by which you endeavour to spill the blood of your brother, and what is yet more horrible, to involve in eternal misery either the soul of your adversary, or your own, for each of which *Jesus Christ* has died: or, should such mischief not ensue, you expose yourself, at least, to evident danger of it,

* Eccli. iii. 20. † Epist. ad Celant. ‡ C. vi. § Epist. ad Soph. || Gen. ix. 6.

it, and are therefore equally criminal in the sight of God; as if the effect had taken place. Consider that this blood which you shall have shed, will cry to God for vengeance against you, as did that of *Abel* against *Cain*; that the soul which you have damned will curse you eternally; that divine judgment will overtake you either in this world, or the next. Think not that to refuse a duel is to forfeit your honour: such honour is imaginary: is it a loss of real honour, to be condemned by the worldly and the wicked, whilst you are praised by the wise and the good? A duel is contrary to the public good, and as such is forbidden by the law of the land. So much is a duel an enemy to your salvation, that the church, to whom the care of your salvation is entrusted, excommunicates all those who fight a duel, or any way contribute to it, and deprives of ecclesiastical burial all those who die in that combat: hence the Council of *Trent* calls a duel an invention of the Devil, to ruin souls by the bloody death of the body *. 3. Call to mind those of your acquaintance who died in duels, and are lost for ever: judge what they think now of duels, and what renunciations they would make of them, if they could return into this world: but there is no time for them. What if you were one of them? 4. When any one shall challenge you, answer him aloud, that you will not fight a duel, being forbidden both by divine and human laws. If any one accuse you of cowardice, tell him, that you know well how to shew your courage on proper occasions, for the service of your king and country. If he threatens to assault you wheresoever he shall find you, answer, that you will defend yourself, but make no appointment either directly or indirectly, saying, I pass by such a place, or the like: if after this he attack you, defend yourself. 5. Avoid the causes of duels, as quarrels and enmities. Offend no person; or if by imprudence, or otherwise, you wrong any one, make him amends, and declare you had no intention to offend him.

Practise all these things, and God will give a blessing to your rank, you will be great both before God and men.

* S. M. 25.

THE END OF THE THIRD PART.

T H E
INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH
IN
CHRISTIAN PIETY.

P A R T IV.

Of the virtues necessary for young persons.

THIS, *Theotime*, is the chief part of your instruction, to which the three former relate as the means to their end ; for after proposing the motives to incline you to virtue, the necessary means of acquiring it, the obstacles which might prevent you, and consequently which ought to be avoided by youth, there now remains to set before you the practice of virtue, and shew the particular virtues to which you ought to apply yourself the more carefully in your youth, as the foundation of other virtues, which will be necessary for you in the course of your life.

C H A P. I.

That young people ought to propose to themselves the example of our Lord Jesus in his youth.

SINCE it is a truth universally received, that Christian piety in all states, consists in imitating our Lord *Jesus Christ*, I would first of all propose here that divine pattern, to give you a perfect model of the virtues you ought to acquire, and by which you ought to form your youth.

It was for this reason, according to the observation of one of the fathers of the church, that this divine master being come to teach and save all-men, was pleased to pass through the several ages of man, to sanctify them all, and by becoming like unto them, to invite them more easily to an imitation of himself.

“ For this reason, says he, he made himself an infant to infants, “ that he might sanctify them. He made himself a child to children, giving holiness to those of that age, to the end he might “ afford them in his person an example of piety and sanctity, and “ subjection. He made himself a young man to young men, giving “ ing

“ing them a pattern, and sanctifying them for the service of our Lord *.”

It is by this divine pattern of youth, dear *Theotime*, that you must form yours, and regulate your actions. It is from him that you must learn the virtues you ought to practise in that age : *Look and make each act of virtue according to the pattern which was shewed thee †.*

We find four things in the Gospel concerning the Son of God during the youth of his mortal life.

The first is his hidden life which he was pleased to lead all that time, not manifesting himself to men, but only to his most blessed mother and St. *Joseph* ; to teach young people to fly vanity, so natural to their age, and so prejudicial to their good, and not to seek after the esteem of the world by a vain ostentation of their parts or virtues ; but only to please God, and content their parents and masters, by a solid progress in virtue and wisdom.

The second is, the example of piety and religion he was pleased to give, by going to the temple at solemn feasts, according to the command of the law, although he was not obliged to it ; being there, he hearkened to the doctors, and asked them questions, as if he would learn of them ; he who was master of the doctors and of the law itself. An admirable example, by which he would shew young people the affection they ought to have for piety, and that their first care must be to serve God and labour for their salvation, accustoming themselves to acts of religion, to prayer, to assist at the divine sacrifice, to the sacraments, to the word of God, and to seek instruction from the mouth of the wise, and from those whom God has given them for their direction.

The third thing is, that so admirable obedience he shewed his parents, which the gospel describes in these terms : *He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them ‡.* An example which ought to confound all young people, who have ordinarily so great a repugnance to submission. What a shame is this for you, *Theotime*, when you are wanting to the great respect you owe them from whom you receive life and instruction, having before your eyes the example of God *, who obeys his creatures ? And what reply will you give to the Son of God concerning your disobedience, when he shall remind you, that he was pleased to be subject and obedient for your example ?

The fourth thing that the gospel teaches us of the youth of our Lord is, that *he increased in wisdom, and age and grace with God and men ¶.* Which is not to be understood of an interior increase of these two perfections in the Son of God ; because from the moment of his conception he was possessed of them in a perfect fulness. But this is to be understood as to the effects he made to appear in his divine actions from

* S. Ireneus l. 2. adversus Hæreses, c. 39. † Exod. xxxv. 40. ‡ Luc. ii. 51.
§ St. Bernard Hom. 1. super missus est. ¶ Luc. ii. 52.

from day to day. As the sun, which although it be as much adorned with light at its rising as at mid-day, is said to become more bright according to the degrees it raises, because its light appears with more brightness to our eyes. But the gospel has made this observation, to teach Christian youth what great care they ought to have to employ their years, in order to increase in wisdom and virtue, and to avoid that so universal a fault of the greatest part, who seem to advance in age to no other end than to diminish in innocence. It is a misfortune infinitely to be deplored, to see that children should be corrupted in proportion as they grow up, and that their age should serve for nothing else but to learn vice, lying, impurity, pride, disobedience, dissoluteness, as St. *Augustine* takes notice of himself *: Children of *Jesus Christ*, is it thus that you imitate your master? He made himself a child like you, to invite you more sweetly to his imitation, and teach you to employ your first years in the increase of virtue, and you miserably lose them in learning vice. Cast your eyes upon this divine pattern, to reform by it the abuses of your youth, which you have committed, and learn to increase in all Christian virtues, which is, to be the disciple and child of *Jesus Christ*. Which that you may perfectly understand, I shall here represent them one after another.

· C H A P. II.

Of the fear of God.

THE first virtue that is necessary for you, is the fear of God; it is that which next to faith is the basis and groundwork of all others. The scripture calls it, *The beginning of wisdom*; and it teacheth us, that it is the first thing which ought to be inspired into young minds. For this reason *Solomon*, instructing youth in his *Proverbs*, begins his instruction with this excellent precept, so often repeated in scripture, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*†. And the same scripture, in the history of holy *Tobias*, observes expressly, that having a child, *From his infancy he taught him to fear God, and to abstain from all sin*‡.

By this fear we must not understand a gross and servile fear, that stands in awe of nothing but the punishment, which it apprehends more than the offence; but a respectful fear,

What this fear is. by which, considering the greatness and majesty of God, his sanctity, his power, his justice, we conceive a profound respect, and apprehend above all things to fall by mortal sin into the displeasure of God so great, so holy, so powerful, so just. We have already spoken of it above, in Part II. Chap. I.

* L. 7. col. f. c. 1.

† Prov. i. 7.

‡ Tob. i. 10.

This, *Theotime*, is the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, and the foundation of true piety. It is this to which I exhort you here, and which you should chiefly aim to acquire.

Practice of the fear of God.

1. Beg it daily of God, who is the author of it: say to him frequently from the bottom of your heart, *Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear, for I am afraid of thy judgments* *.

1. *Beg it.*

2. Conceive an awful respect for the majesty of God. He is the sovereign Lord of all things, infinite in all his perfections, in majesty, in wisdom, in goodness, in power, in justice. All creatures adore him, the angels themselves tremble at the sight of his immensity. All that is great in the world is but an atom in his sight, as he has created all things by one word, so he could destroy them all in a moment. *There is none like to thee, O Lord; thou art great, and great is thy name in might. Who shall not fear thee, O King of nations* †?

2. *Have a great sense of the greatness of God.*

3. Fear above all things to displease God, and let that be the first and principal thing you regard in all your actions, whether God be not therein offended.

3. *Fear to displease God by sin.*

4. When you speak of God, never speak of him but with a profound respect: and endeavour to cause by your example, that he never be spoken of otherwise in your presence.

4. *Speak of God with profound respect.*

C H A P. III.

Of the love of God.

IF the greatness of God oblige us to fear and honour him with the most profound respect, his goodness engages us as much to love him. We must fear God by reason of his greatness which renders him infinitely adorable; and we must love him because of his goodness, which makes him infinitely amiable; we must not separate these two virtues, fear and love. *The fear of God is the beginning of his love* †. And love is the perfection of fear. *He that is without fear cannot be justified* §. *He that loveth not abideth in death* ||.

The love of God ought to be joined with fear.

We must then love God, dear *Theotime*; for how can it be that you should not love goodness itself, and him who hath loved you first?

VOL. I.

K

But

* Psalm cxviii. 20.
† 1 Jo. iii. 14.

† Jer. x. 6. 7.

† Eccli. xxv. 16.

§ Eccli. i. 28.

We must begin betimes to love God.

We are created for that end.

And obliged thereto.

But you must love him betimes, and from your tender years, you must begin that early which you must do all your life, and during all eternity. The love of God is our last end. God has placed you in this world for no other end than to love him; and that coming to know him for your Creator, you should render that which a work owes to its workman, a creature to its Creator, a child to his father, that is, love. And to induce you the better thereunto, he has added all imaginable favours, having designed you for the enjoyment of his kingdom in heaven, redeemed you when you were lost, and redeemed you by the death of his only Son, called you to the grace of Christianity, enlightened you with faith, sanctified you by his grace, received you often into his mercy, and replaced you among his children, after you had grievously offended him; and a thousand other blessings has he bestowed upon you. *The time*, how is it possible not to love God who has loved you so much!

Two motives of the love of God.

There are two motives for which God ought to be beloved. The one is his goodness, which he manifests unto us by all the favours and blessings he bestows upon us. The other is the goodness he possesses in himself, which makes him transcendently amiable. For, if we might suppose a thing impossible viz. that God had never shewed us any favour, yet he deserves to be infinitely beloved, by reason of the sovereign goodness and infinite perfections he enjoys in himself, which render him infinitely amiable. When I say we must love God, I include a twofold love; the first, for the benefits he has bestowed upon us, the second in consideration of his infinite goodness; for in the love of his goodness consists the eternal happiness of both men and angels.

The essential condition of the love of God.

But take notice, *The time*, that the love of God, to be real, ought to have one very particular condition, which occurs not in any other love: for it does not suffice to love God as we love creatures, but we must love him above all things, that is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart* *. For the love we have for his creatures, should be only in regard of the love of God.

Wherein the love of God consists.

In a word, the love of God consists in preferring God before all things; before the goods of the world, pleasures, honours, friends, and life itself; so that you must be prepared never to love these things to the prejudice of the love you owe to God; and be resolved rather to lose them a thousand times, than to be wanting to the obedience you are obliged to render unto him. It is in this preference of God before all things, wherein the essential point

* Luke x. 27.

point of the love God consists; a preference without which it is impossible to love God, or to be in the state of salvation.

You must then labour early to acquire this so perfect a love, and this so necessary a preference, to engrave it deep in your heart: and to the end you be not deceived therein, by taking, as very many do, apparent love for the real, see the principal acts you must practise therein, by which you may know whether you love God truly or no.

The practice of the love of God.

1. Above all things fear, and have a horror of sin, because it is displeasing to God, and infinitely opposite to his goodness, and be resolved never to commit a sin upon any account whatsoever.

1. *Have a horror for sin.*

2. Fly venial sins as much as possible, because they displease God; and although they do not destroy charity, that is the love of God, in your soul, yet they diminish and weaken it, and dispose you to fall into mortal sin.

2. *Avoid venial sins.*

3. Labour to acquire the virtues so necessary for you, and which he requires of you. It is the property of love, to desire to please him whom one loves. If you love God, dear *Theo-*time, you will be careful not only to preserve yourself in his holy grace by avoiding sin, but you will endeavour to acquire those virtues you know will make you most acceptable to him.

3. *Labour to acquire virtue.*

4. Often in your heart and with your lips form acts of the love of God; wish often that God be served and loved by all his creatures. Be troubled when you see him offended; hinder it as much as you can; and endeavour by your words and example to move others to love him.

4. *Advance the service of God.*

5. Begin from your youth to love him whom you must never cease to love. At what time soever you begin to love him, it will be always too late, and you will always have reason to express that grief which

5. *Begin betimes to love God.*

St. *Augustine* did; "I have loved thee too late, O ancient beauty, I have loved thee too late, O eternal goodness *." Beg of him frequently the grace to love him as you ought, and daily say to him from your heart those excellent words of *David*: O God, *what have I in heaven? And besides thee what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart; and the God that is my portion for ever* †.

* Conf. lib. 10. cap. 27.

† Ps. lxxii. 25, 26.

C H A P. IV.

Of the love of parents.

HE that feareth the Lord, says the wise man, *honoureth his parents, and will serve them as his masters that brought him into the world* *. Yes, *Theotime*, if you have the fear

The fear of God makes us honour our parents.

of God in your heart, you will honour your parents, and all those to whom he has given authority over you, because it is his will and command. *Honour thy father and thy mother.* And if you honour them not, you have neither the fear nor love of God.

For to contemn a duty, which nature herself dictates, and which God has so strictly commanded, is not to have the fear of God. There is no menace which he has not denounced against those children who are wanting to this duty. He says, *He that afflicteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is infamous and unhappy* †. *He that curseth his father and mother, his lamp shall be put out in the midst of darkness* ‡. *The eye that mocketh at his father, and that despiseth the labour of his mother in bearing him, let the ravens of the brooks pick it out, and the young eagles eat it* §. *Of what an evil fame is he that forsaketh his father : and he is cursed of God that angereth his mother* ¶. I wish these menaces were deeply engraven in the minds of all children, who forget ever so little their duty towards their parents.

The severity of the Old Testament. Add to these threats the rigorous law God had established in the Old Testament against wicked children.

If a man (says the law) have a stubborn and unruly son, who will not hear the commandments of his father or mother, and being corrected, slighteth obedience : they shall take him and bring him to the ancients of his city, and to the gate of judgment, and shall say to them : This our son is rebellious and stubborn, he slighteth hearing our admonitions, he giveth himself to revelling and to debauchery, and banquetings : the people of the city shall stone him : and he shall die, that you may take away the evil out of the midst of you, and all Israel hearing it may be afraid ||.

This is the severe law God established against rebellious children. And although it be no longer in force, yet they ought no less to fear his wrath and vengeance, whereof but too many effects daily appear, by the visible punishments which he inflicts sooner or later upon children who fail in so holy and inviolable a duty. This sin is one of those which God commonly punishes in this life ; and there scarce any wicked children whom some punishment from God does not befall in this life, which is often the beginning of an eternal chastisement.

But let us leave these motives of terror and fear to stubborn and obstinate children, who are not to be moved to their duty by reason

* Eccli. iii. 8. † Prov. xix. 26. ‡ Prov. xx. 20. § Prov. xxx. 10. ¶ Eccli. iii. 18. || Deut. xxi. 18, 19, 20, 21.

son and love ; as for you, *Theotime*, who wish to serve God with all your heart, these menaces are not necessary ; and to persuade you to render to your parents all the respect you owe them, it suffices to tell you, that it is highly reasonable, and the will of God. These are the two motives by which the Apostle *St. Paul* convinced children of this great obligation. *Children*, says he, *obey your parents in the Lord ; for this is just* *. *Children*, *obey your parents in all things ; for this is well-pleasing to the Lord* †. Render then to your parents, *Theotime*, the honour you owe them, considering, 1. That it is just and reasonable ; 2. That it is God's will it should be so : God, I say, whose will ought to be the rule of our actions, and whose command is the most powerful motive to an obedient soul.

The honour you ought to give to your parents includes four principal things, which you owe them, viz. respect, love, obedience, and assistance.

Children owe four things to their parents.

1. Bear them great respect, considering them as those from whom next to God you have received your being. Never despise them upon any consideration whatsoever ; either interiorly, by any thought of contempt ; or exteriorly, by any words or disrespectful behaviour. Receive with good will their instructions, admonitions, and reprimands. *My son*, says the wise man, *hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother* ‡. *A fool laugheth at the instruction of his father, but he that regarded reproofs shall become more prudent* §.

1. *Respect.*

2. Entertain an affectionate love for them. Remember, says the wise man, *that thou hadst not been born but through them ; and make a return to them* ¶. Now this can only be done by loving them. Yet take notice, that this love must not only be a natural and sensible love ; it must also be a rational love, and according to God. To love them according to God, you must love them because God commands it, and as he commands it, that is, in such a manner that you love principally their spiritual good and salvation, and endeavour to procure it by your prayers, and all other means which lie in your power.

2. *Love.*

Shew a ready obedience to them, as holding the place of God : yet only as *St. Paul* advises, *in the Lord* *, because such is his will ; for it is God who commands you to obey them, and when you obey them you obey God ; as, on the contrary, not obeying them you disobey God, except they command any thing against the honour of God, or your good ; for in these two cases you owe them no obedience. Nevertheless, you must be very discreet on such an occasion, and procure the best advice, that you may not be deceived.

3. *Obedience.*

4. You

* Eph. vi. 1. † Col. iii. 20. ‡ Prov. i. 8. § Prov. xv. 5. ¶ Eccli. vii. 30
|| Eph. vi. 1.

Assistance.

4. You must assist them in their necessities, in sickness, poverty, old age, and, in a word, in all their temporal and spiritual necessities. To forsake them on such occasions is a very great crime, which cries to God for vengeance *.

In short, *Theotime*, to keep yourself always within the bounds of your duty towards your parents, set often before your eyes two very contrary examples. Reflect on wretched

Two contrary examples.

Abalom, who having violated in all manner of ways the duty of a child towards his father, met at last with the just chastisement of his crime, in the dreadful and miserable death, we have related above. On the other side, consider often the admirable example not of a man, but of the Son of God himself, who becoming incarnate, and made man for our salvation, would be subject and obedient to his most holy mother and St. *Joseph*, until the age of thirty years †. He who was the sovereign master of all things, to teach by his example all children the honour they ought to render their parents, and how highly criminal it is for wretched man to refuse obeying them, from whom he has received his life, when the God of heaven and earth humbled himself so far as to obey her from whom he was pleased to receive his temporal being.

C H A P. V.

Of other persons whom youth ought to honour.

NEXT to your parents there are other persons you ought particularly to honour.

1. You must honour those who represent them, your tutors, and those who have a charge of your person; your elder brothers and sisters, for to them there is a respect due.

2. Your masters, whether private or public, from whom you receive instruction in virtue and learning. You ought to honour them by so much more, as they represent your parents, and as the benefits you receive from them, such as virtue and knowledge (the ornaments of the mind) far surpass all worldly riches. And as you owe to your parents respect, love, obedience, and assistance; you owe also to your masters respect, love, obedience, and gratitude.

3. You owe a special honour to your spiritual masters, such as your pastor, and all those who instruct you in the way of salvation, and chiefly your ghostly father §; respect him much, regarding him as an officer of God; love him as the minister of your salvation, obey him and follow his advice, in which young people are often very defective.

4. Honour

* Ecclus. iii. 14. † Luke ii, ‡ Heb. xiii. 17.

4. Honour all the persons that are venerable, either for dignity, as priests, whom the scripture commands you to honour *, or for their age, as old men, to whom young people should shew much respect †, or for their virtue: for if you honour God, you will also honour them who serve him: and lastly, men in public authority, as the king ‡, and magistrates, whom God commands you to honour, as representing his place, and whom he has established for his ministers in the temporal government of mankind. To the first is due obedience and fidelity, as the sovereign and God's representative on earth; the same is likewise due to his ministers, in proportion to the rank and authority they hold under the prince §.

CHAP. VI.

Of tractableness.

THIS is one of the first, and chief virtues of youth, which being blind, subject to many faults, and not able to conduct itself, is under an absolute necessity of being guided by others more knowing, and submitting itself to their conduct; and this submission is called tractableness. *Tractableness necessary.*

It is a virtue which makes us love, willingly receive, search after, and put in practice the instructions, counsels, reprimands, and exhortations to good. O what an excellent virtue, *What it is.* *Theotime*, is this, which we may call the ornament of youth, the instrument of good education, the mother of all virtues in young persons, the source of all good, the cause of their salvation! A tractable mind is capable of all good, as an untractable mind is subject to all wickedness. *Its recommendations.*

Solomon, in the beginning of his reign, having received from God a permission to ask whatever he pleased, with full assurance of obtaining it, he begged in the first place, that the Lord would give him *an understanding heart*, or docile mind ||. For though the greatest favour he sought for, was the gift of wisdom, for his assistance in governing himself and his subjects, yet he began his prayer with asking a tractable disposition, which he esteemed a necessary means for acquiring that wisdom he asked of God. Imitate, O *Theotime*, this young and wise prince: ask it often of God; and when you beseech him to give you wisdom and virtue (which ought to be daily) ask for this docility of mind, without which the other cannot be obtained, and endeavour on your part to acquire so desirable a perfection, by those means we have assigned in Chap. III. Part III.

* Eccli. vii. 33. † Levit. xix. 32. ‡ 1 Pet. v. 5. § Prov. xxiv. 21. ¶ 1 Pet. ii. 17. § Rom. xiii. 1. || 3 Kings iii. 9.

C H A P. VII.

Of obedience.

Obedience necessary. **O**BEDIENCE is the daughter of tractableness : a tractable mind renders itself obedient to the will of those who have any authority over it. It is a fundamental virtue necessary for youth, without which one can never arrive at solid piety ; which made the wise man say, that *The mind of the just will meditate obedience* * ; because it is a most necessary and effectual means of acquiring virtue, to which it aspires.

It is not only necessary for youth, but also so suitable to that age, that it is appropriated, and as it were natural to it. A disobedient child is a kind of monster ; and an ancient author numbering up the disorders found in the world, puts in the third rank *a disobedient child*, which he says, is a disorder bringing many others after it †.

Practice. Love then, *Theotime*, this virtue so agreeable to your age, and otherwise so necessary and efficacious towards rendering you really virtuous all the rest of your life. Obey humbly and willingly your parents, your masters, and all those who have authority over you.

I say, obey humbly and willingly ; because it is not enough to obey, but you must obey as you ought ; a constrained obedience, yielded unwillingly through fear or force, is a slavish obedience, which has no merit, nor any shadow of virtue.

True obedience proceeds from a sense of one's duty, and a desire of pleasing God in performing it. The first makes it humble, the second makes it voluntary, prompt and easy.

You must obey thus, if you desire your obedience should be virtuous and pleasing to God. And by obeying thus, you learn in good time not to do your own will, but that of others. Self-conceit is the usual cause of the destruction of men, and chiefly of young persons, it is an ill guide, which leads them into precipices, and makes them fall into many misfortunes. The wise man says, *An obedient man shall speak of victory* ‡. If you are obedient in your tender age, you will recount one day the victories you have gained over your most dangerous enemy, your own will ; you will know how useful this virtue was, and give thanks to God for it all your life.

* Prov. xv. 28.
xxi. 28.

† De 12. abusonibus sæculi apud Cyprian.

‡ Prov.

C H A P. VIII.

Of chastity.

TRACTABLENESS and obedience hinder the disorders of the mind, and chastity those of the body.

It is a virtue which entirely flies the pleasures of the flesh, and studies to stifle the thoughts, desires, and sense of unclean delights, because they displease God. *What chastity is.*

It is necessary for all men, but particularly for young persons, who being more susceptible of immodesty, have a most particular need of this virtue. *How necessary.*

But as there is no age for which it is more necessary than for youth, so there is none to which it is more suitable and advantageous. I wish, *Theotime*, that you, and all those of your age, could comprehend the beauty of this virtue, with the ornament and advantage it brings. *How suitable.*

If chastity renders men like angels, because it makes them imitate the purity of the angels in a frail body : it is chiefly in young persons where this effect is found, because their age being less corrupted by sin, their chastity approaches nearer to the purity of those celestial spirits. *It makes them like angels.*

If chastity does partake something of the glory of martyrdom, according to St. *Jerome**, by reason of the rude combats it sustains, which sometimes are not inferior to torments : it is chiefly to the chastity of young persons to whom this glory appertains, because the combats they suffer are ordinarily more violent and more frequent than those of others ; which made St. *Bernard* say, " that besides the martyrdom which is undergone by the effusion of blood, there are yet three others, that is, " frugality practised in plenty, whereof *David* and *Job* shewed a " pattern ; liberality in poverty, exercised by *Tobias*, and the widow " in the Gospel ; and chastity in youth, preserved by *Joseph* in " *Egypt* †."

Those excellent commendations of chastity, wherein it is called " the flower and ornament of manners, the honour of the body, the " groundwork of sanctity, the presage of all sorts of virtues ‡," chiefly belong to youth : for it is true, that chastity in young persons is a great foundation for virtue, and all manner of good may be expected from a chaste youth : because, as the spirit of God cannot dwell in impure hearts, so it takes delight to inhabit chaste souls, and to heap upon them all sorts of favours.

Ruffinus recounts to this purpose, that St. *Gregory* of *Nazianzen* being yet young, had a vision of two ladies, who appeared to him, gloriously

* Ep. ad Demetr. † S. Bern. in sententiis. ‡ S. Cyprian de bono pudicitiae.

gloriously beautiful ; and as the chaste young man was uneasy at their presence, they said to him, " Young man, let not our presence afflict you ; we are two sisters well known to you, the one of us is called *Wisdom*, the other *Chastity* ; we are come to visit you, because you have prepared an agreeable habitation for us in your soul."

Thus chastity is inseparable from wisdom, and attracts the divine grace and benediction upon young souls adorned with it.

Study then, *Theotime*, to obtain this amiable virtue, which you ought to esteem the ornament and happiness of your youth ; you will find the means of acquiring it, and preserving it, in Part III. Chap. VIII. Now as to the practice of this virtue, remember that it may be violated many ways, by thoughts, by words, by desires, and immodest actions ; to be chaste, therefore, you must be so not only in actions, but in thoughts, desires, and words. For whatever is done against chastity mortally wounds the soul.

C H A P IX.

Of bashfulness.

AS trees, in producing their fruit, produce at the same time leaves to preserve them against the injuries of the air ; so charity, producing chastity in a soul, brings forth also bashfulness, to preserve it from every thing that may hurt it. It is impossible to have chastity without bashfulness, which is of singular use, and highly necessary for the preservation of chastity.

Chastity abhors the thoughts, desires, and sense of unclean pleasures, as we have said : *Wherein it consists.* and bashfulness removes all those exterior things which may be either the cause or effects of these thoughts, desires, &c. as immodest words, unchaste looks, lascivious gestures, kisses, and all other things which may in the least offend chastity. Bashfulness then is a virtue which sets all these things at a distance, and which cannot permit them either in ones self or others, without blushing at them, as St. *Ambrose* remarks *. Now this virtue agrees particularly with youth.

For, as St. *Bernard* observes very well, although we ought to aim in every age at this virtue, which is the ornament of all ages, yet it shines with great brilliancy in youth. " What is there more amiable," says he, " than a modest young man ? How beautiful and rich an ornament is bashfulness in the life and countenance of a young man ? What an assured sign of future most hopeful dispositions ? There is not a more apparent mark of chaste simplicity,"

* 1 Off. 18.

“plicity, nor a more evident testimony of pure innocence. It is
 “the lamp of a chaste soul, perpetually shining, whereby it no
 “sooner discovers the least indecency, than it declares its abhorrence.
 “And thus it banishes sin from the soul, and preserves purity.
 “It is the glory of the conscience, the guardian of honour, the or-
 “nament of life, the seat of wisdom and piety, the first-fruits of
 “virtue, the honour of nature, and the mark of all purity*.”
 Weigh well these commendations one after another, and judge of
 the esteem you ought to have for this excellent virtue.

The vice opposite to this virtue is impudence and boldness, which
 blushes at nothing. It is a vice as odious in young men, as bashful-
 ness is amiable. It is the sign and effect of a wicked disposition,
 and it is no less the origin of many sins, than bashfulness is the pure
 spring of many virtues.

Endeavour to acquire this excellent virtue, *Practice.*
Theotime; and abhor not only the sins of impu-
 rity, but whatsoever may lead to, or in the least wound this virtue,
 as all truly chaste souls do. It is reported of
 St. Bernard, that his bashfulness was so great in *Example.*
 his younger years, that when any one happened
 to speak an indecent word in his presence, he blushed as if he had
 received a blow on the ear: you will find the practice of this virtue
 before, in Part III.

C H A P. X.

Of modesty.

NEXT to bashfulness, modesty is also abso- *Wherein it con-*
 lutely necessary for young people. Bash- *sists.*
 fulness has for its object the removing all exte-
 rior things contrary to chastity, which it does not permit either in
 itself or others. And modesty excludes whatsoever appears disorder-
 ly or indecent in the exterior of the person, as in the eyes, gait, be-
 haviour, dress, words, where wantonness is a sign and an effect of an
 abandoned disposition.

This virtue is the more to be wished for in *The mark of a*
 a young man, as it is a certain mark of interior *wise and virtuous*
 virtue, of wisdom and piety. The mind is *mind.*
 known by the actions, and the wisdom of a man
 by his exterior. *The wisdom (says the wise man) of a man shineth*
in his countenance †. A man is known by his look, and a wise man,
when thou meetest him, is known by his countenance. The attire of the
body, and the laughter of the teeth, and the gait of a man shew what he
is ‡. Which made St. Ambrose say §, that “the disposition of the
“ mind

* S. Bern Serm. ult. in Can. † Eccles. viii. 1. ‡ Eccli. xix. 26, 27. § Lib.
 1. Offic. 18.

“ mind is known by the posture of the body, and that the exterior motion is a kind of voice by which the mind discovers itself.”

So that, *Theotime*, if you have a wise and well regulated mind, it will appear by the modesty of your exterior behaviour ; but if you be loose in your carriage, it is a certain sign that you have a light, ill-governed, indiscreet mind, incapable of any serious thought, and which permits itself to be carried away with vain and impertinent imaginations. Such outward misbehaviour is a bad sign at present, and a strong presage of your future ill conduct.

Remarkable example. St. Gregory of Nazianzen, in his fourth oration against Julian the apostate, relates, that having studied with him at Athens in his youth, he prognosticated that he would be very wicked, seeing the indecency and disorder of his carriage. “ One might see in him many things that foreboded nothing good ; a head always moving, a wandering and furious eye, his feet never without motion, a haughty look, an insolent laughter, a confused speech ; you might hear him ask many impertinent questions, and give more foolish answers : In short (he says) I judged from that time what he would be afterwards. And after I had attentively considered him, I said to many of my friends, what a monster the Roman empire is fostering and breeding up in this man * !”

Practice. To practise well this virtue, so necessary for your age :

Modesty in exterior actions. 1. Endeavour to be always guarded, that nothing indecent or light appear in your looks, gait, or gesture ; have a serious, sweet, and affable countenance, with an aversion to curiosity, and a modest carriage, the best marks of a good education. Study to be such in all companies, and in all places ; with superiors, by reason of the respect you owe them ; with your equals, or inferiors, because you must give them edification and good example ; even when you are alone, since you are always in the presence of God. A wise and well-regulated mind is always modest wherever he is ; because he is not modest to please men, which would be mere vanity, but to please God who sees him. *Let your modesty be known to all men*, says the Apostle, *the Lord is nigh* *.

Modesty in the church. 2. Shew a particular modesty in the church. It is the house of God, and a place appointed for prayer and his worship : you must enter there with respect. *Keep thy foot*, says the wise man, *when thou goest into the house of God* †. You must remain there with a great modesty, and in an humble and devout posture, agreeable to the sanctity of the place. To enter there as into a profane house, without respect or restraint ; to continue there without modesty, gazing about, speaking without necessity, laughing with others ; to be there in an indecent posture, lolling upon the seats, kneeling upon

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* Orat. 4. in Julian, † Phil. iv. 5: ‡ Eccles. iv. 17.

one knee, and other like irreverences, are sins which offend God more than the generality of people imagine. Judge by this, *Theotime*, what we must say of the open immodesties committed in the church, by those who are not ashamed to carry their crimes in the midst of the sanctuary, and offend God in the place consecrated to his worship. It is a crime which God detests much by the mouth of his prophet *. And St. *Augustine* in his confessions, among the sins of his life, expresses a sorrow for this as one of the greatest, for which he declares that God punished him, though not according to his demerit †.

3. Modesty also regards dress, wherein you *Decency in attire.* must avoid two things; superfluous ornaments, which discover a vain and light mind; but much more, such as serve to promote impurity. Be cloathed then modestly, according to your condition, without seeking other ornaments than such as decency permits. *Glory not in apparel at any time ‡*, (says the wise man). It is a vain and impertinent glory. St. *Jerome* says excellently well §, “That a Christian ought not to seek to be affectedly or too “curiously clothed.” But above all avoid the ornaments that may endanger chastity, whether in yourself or others. The same saint calls young people, who curl and trick up themselves wantonly, “The pests of modesty.” O, *Theotime*, if you have a truly chaste heart, you will fly all these ornaments, which can serve you to no good end, and which may much prejudice either you or those who see you. “Chastity (says St. *Cyprian*) hath no other ornaments “than modesty; and she accounts herself to be sufficiently beautiful “when she displeaseth the wicked; she seeks not to be adorned, “being herself her own ornament ||.”

To acquire this virtue of modesty, be careful to practise these means: 1. Beg it often of God. *Means to acquire modesty.* 2. Be willing to be admonished when you do any action which is not very modest, and procure a friend who may warn you of it. 3. When you hear another's immodesty blamed, take notice of it as a precaution to yourself. 4. converse often with discreet and modest persons, observe their modesty for your own imitation. Fly the company of light minds, and of such as are irregular in their outward behaviour.

CHAP. XI.

Of modesty in words.

MODESTY consists also in words. It is a great virtue, and principally in young men, to know how to speak discreetly; for

* Sophonias i. 9. † L. 3. Confess. ‡ Eccli. xi. 4. § Ad Eustoch. || Lib. 1. de bono Pudic.

for as the wise man says, *by the tongue wisdom is discerned* *. Now, to speak with discretion, two things are required. 1. To speak nothing ill or impertinent. 2. To speak properly at a fit time, that is, when and how one ought.

1. Never utter a wanton or indecent word. The Apostle St. Paul † forbids Christians so much as to name obscene things, how much more to speak of them with pleasure, or danger to our neighbour. *He that speaketh unjust things cannot be hid, neither shall the chastising judgment pass him by* ‡. Fly as the plague, all unchaste discourse, the pest and corruption of good manners, and which causes a vast number of sins as well in the speaker as in the hearer. Fly also all dubious expressions, or such as carry with them a double sense, which may give others occasion of impure thoughts. And lastly, avoid all indecent or scurrilous expressions, which men have so frequently in their mouths, and are not sufferable amongst the debauched, much less in you.

2. In good or indifferent discourses be not too ready or hasty in speaking, but hear before you speak. There are some who are always the first in talking, and the last in holding their tongues; who meddle with every thing, interrupt others, and speak of things they understand not. It is the sign of an ill-bred, light, indiscreet, and sometimes of a proud mind. The wise man says excellently well, *Hast thou seen a man hasty to speak? Folly is rather to be looked for than his amendment* §.

To regulate well your speech, see the maxims you must observe.

Rules for speaking. 1. Speak little, and hear much. It is the best mark of a wise mind, to hearken to others, and speak little. The scripture says, *he that setteth bounds to his words is knowing and wise* *.

And that silence is so great a sign of wisdom, that *even a fool, if he will hold his peace shall be counted wise: and if he close his lips, a man of understanding* †. I speak not of sullen melancholy silence, which springs from stupidity and heaviness; but of a wise silence, which modesty directs, in order to give ear to others, and speak in due season.

How we must behave in conversation. In conversation, when another speaks, have a care of three things. 1. Not to speak before you have heard what he says. 2. Not to interrupt him who speaks. 3. Not to be hasty to talk, when sometimes you understand not what is spoken of.

These are three precepts of the wise man: *Before you hear answer not a word: and interrupt not others in the midst of their discourse* **. *Learn before thou speak* ††. *He that answereth before he heareth, sheweth himself to be a fool, and worthy of confusion* ‡‡.

When

* Eccli. iv. 29. † Ephes. v. 3. ‡ Wisd. i. 8. § Prov. xxix. 20. || Prov. xvii. 27. ¶ Prov. xvii. 28. Job xiii. 5. ** Eccli. xi. 8. †† Eccli. xviii. 13. ‡‡ Eccli. xviii. 13.

When you shall be in honourable company, observe what the wise man directs you to do : *Young man, scarcely speak in thy own cause. If thou be asked twice, let thy answer be short. In many things be as thou wert ignorant.* And this not by dissimulation, but by modesty : *hear in silence, and withhold seeking* *.

C H A P. XII.

Of other vices of the tongue, and particularly of swearing.

BESIDES wicked and impertinent discourse, and a vanity in talking, there also many other vices of the tongue, which Christian modesty ought carefully to avoid ; the first whereof is swearing.

To be addicted to swearing is a very vicious quality, especially in young people. I speak not of oaths appointed by religion, to ascertain a truth when sufficient necessity requires it, a necessity which seldom happens to young persons ; but of those oaths so common amongst Christians, where the adorable name of God is called upon and taken in vain, in the least anger or impatience, and sometimes deliberately, from a detestable custom of swearing by the name of God on all occasions.

This sin is one of the most fatal habits a man can contract : For,

1. It is a contempt of God, to respect so little his holy name, which all creatures adore, and whose sanctity makes all the angels to tremble ; and this notwithstanding God's express prohibition : *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain* †.

2. It is a heinous outrage offered to his Son *Jesus Christ*, to treat with so much irreverence the precious death he suffered for our redemption, and the adorable blood he shed for our salvation. An outrage which is no less than that he received by the cruelty of his executioners. “ He was scourged (says St. *Austin*) with the rod of the *Jews*, and he is now scourged by the blasphemous tongues of wicked Christians. And they sin no less who blaspheme *Jesus Christ* reigning in heaven, than those who blasphemed him when he walked upon earth.”

3. This vice causes many other sins to be committed : for besides that there is no sin multiplied like swearing when grown habitual, it draws the curse of God upon those who are accustomed to it, by which they are abandoned to their passions, and to the occasions of sin ; for this reason the wise man said : *A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity, and a scourge shall not depart from his house* ‡.

4. This

* Eccli. xxxii. 10, 11, 12. † Exod. xx. Eccli. xxiii. 12.

Hard to be corrected.

The sin of the devil.

a horrible thing, that Christians, who ought to praise God upon earth, as the angels praise him in heaven, should offer him here the same injuries as the devils throw out against him in hell.

Blasphemers punishment.

Blasphemers punishment. O, *Theotime*, fly this detestable sin, abominable before God and men, odious in persons of every age, but principally in youth *. Remember that the ancient law condemned blasphemers to death, and St. Paul delivered over to the devil two Christians guilty of this crime; *That they may learn*, says he, *not to blaspheme* †. And St. Gregory relates, “How a child accustomed to swear in his impatience by the name of God, was seized with a mortal distemper, and assaulted by evil spirits, which caused him to depart this life in his father’s arms, who being too indulgent in correcting him, had bred up in this child a great sinner for hell, as the same saint observes ‡.

Remedy.

The remedy of this sin, when one has ever so little a habit or inclination to it, is to fly the causes, as anger, gaming, wicked company, and all other things, which every one knows to be to themselves an occasion of swearing. But above all, it is a powerful, and even necessary remedy, to impose upon one’s self some rigorous punishment every time he shall fall into this sin; as some alms, some prayers to be performed the same day, some fasting to be observed soon after, or some other mortification.

Avoid every degree of oaths or imprecations, and other phrases, which, though not oaths, tend to swearing upon occasions. Christian doctrine requires, that we should not swear at all, according to that holy precept of our Saviour, *I say to you not to swear at all. But let your speech be yea, yea; and no, no: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil* §.

Of detraction.

Detraction is another sin of the tongue, which you ought not only to avoid, but abhor.

What detraction is.

To detract, is to report of another a sin hurtful to his reputation, which he has not committed, or else a sin which he has committed, but is not public; for as long as the sin of

* Levit. xxiv. 16. † 1 Tim. i. 20. ‡ L. 4. Dialog. c. 18. § Mat. v. 34, 35

our neighbour is secret, to reveal it to them who knew it not, is to do him an injury.

Detraction is sometimes committed out of malice, as through hatred, revenge, envy, or with a design to hurt our neighbour. Sometimes by indiscretion and levity, and from an inclination one has to speak of the evil he has heard, or knows of another, which is too common amongst young people.

Although the first manner of detraction be most criminal, the second nevertheless is not without sin, for it always takes away the reputation of our neighbour, it obliges to repair the honour he was deprived of : This forwardness in talking of others defects, is the result of a mind defective in charity or prudence, and often in both : for charity makes us conceal the faults of others, as we would have our own kept private ; and prudence hinders us from speaking ill of another when to no good end, or without necessity.

Avoid this sin, *Theotime*, as a base thing, unworthy of a generous or truly Christian soul, and odious both to God and men. *The detraction, says the wise man, is the abomination to men **.

Be not therefore ready to speak of other defects, but keep them secret when you know them. The wise man says excellently well, *Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbour ? let it die within thee † ;* that is, let it go no farther. In fine, protect the honour of another, as you know it is dear to him, and as you desire he would protect yours.

Yet it is to be observed, that it is not detraction to speak of another's sin, when it is for his good, or to prevent the hurt of others, when one tells it to a discreet person, who can or ought to apply a remedy to it. On the contrary, it is always charity to do so ; and there is frequently an obligation of conscience, and a very strict obligation, in which one is sometimes defective, out of fearfulness, or some vain pretence, which must be charged to the want of charity for the salvation of your neighbour, and which renders us guilty in the sight of God of the sins of others.

Of injuries and reproaches.

Avoid all contentions, which are the causes of many evils : In debates which arise, avoid speaking injurious words, utter no reproaches or threats ; as vile things, and unworthy of a virtuous soul. Call to mind, that to return injury for injury, reproach for reproach, is to wash a spot with ink, and make it yet more black ‡ ; for to blot out an injury often only received in imagination, with a sin which is frequently mortal : it is to defend your honour to the pre-

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udice

* Prov. xxiv. 9. † Eccli. xix. 10. ‡ Eccli. xxiii.

judice of your salvation ; if that can be accounted defending your honour, which defends it by the ruin of another's credit. The spirit of Christianity not only forbids doing an injury, but also the returning it to those who first offer it to you, according to those excellent maxims of St. Paul, *Bless them that persecute you : bless and curse not. Render to no man evil for evil. Revenge not yourselves : but give place to wrath. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good* * ; that is, the ill which another does you, by the good you render him.

This, you will say, is very hard. 'Tis true, *Theotime*, therefore you must learn to practise it betimes. These maxims are difficult to those who are not instructed in their youth, and have not learned to live but according to the inclinations of nature ; yet they are easy to those who apply themselves in good time to do the will of God, and live according to the spirit of his Son *Jesus Christ*, by imitating his example, and practising his maxims as a Christian ought to do, otherwise he is only a Christian in name, and not in reality.

Of sowers of discord.

Beware of another sin of the tongue, which is but too common among young persons, yet very prejudicial : it is to be the author of discord, by reports which are often made through indiscretion, not foreseeing the evil which may from thence arise, and sometimes out of a bad design, to stir up divisions and quarrels.

This sin is great, and more heinous than is imagined ; for it is the cause of many other sins, and of all the ills which accompany quarrels. The wise man says, that God detests it : *Six things there are which the Lord hateth, and the seventh his soul detesteth : him that soweth discord among brethren* †.

The whisperer and the double-tongued is accursed : for he hath troubled many that were at peace ‡. *A sinful man will trouble his friends, and bring in debate in the midst of them that are at peace* §. Yes, *Theotime* ; for as peace and union proceed from God, discords and dissensions spring from the devil. For this reason the Son of God in the gospel says, that *peace-makers*, that, is those who apply themselves to procure or preserve peace among men, *are children of God*. But if those who cause peace are the children of God, "Then those who disturb it are the children of Satan ||."

Fly this sin, *Theotime*, because it is most heinous and criminal, detested both by God and men. Keep a guard upon your words, to the end you may never cause any discord among others ; above all be not the author of it through malice, or deliberate purpose. Conceive a horror of this vice, which can bring you nothing but inevitable ruin.

* Rom: xii. 14, 17, 19, 21. † Prov. vi. 16, 19. ‡ Eccli. xxviii. 15. Eccli. xxviii. 11. || St. Greg. De cura pastorali. 3tia pars.

Of lying.

There remains lying, which is not the least considerable among the sins of the tongue; and it is so much more important that you should be solidly instructed on this subject, as it is frequent with young persons, and infinitely pernicious when once become habitual.

A lie is always a sin, because it is always against truth, known to be such by him who speaks; and although it be not a mortal sin, when it is not in a matter of consequence, nevertheless the habit of lying, although lightly, is not a light thing, nor of small importance.

A habit or custom of lying opens a gate to an infinite number of other vices. A lying person will become a cheat and deceiver in his behaviour, double in his words, unfaithful in his promises, a hypocrite in his manners, a dissembler in his actions, a flatterer, and faint-hearted when he should speak truth; bold and shameless to affirm lies, impudent to maintain them as certain truths, a swearer, detractor, mistrustful of every one; for as he is accustomed to lie, he believes that others always speak false. A mind addicted to lying will easily be so in things of moment, and consequently involved in heinous sins.

The vice it produces.

So that, *Theotime*, there are few vices more pernicious, and principally to youth, than this custom of lying. For this reason, *Be not willing to make any manner of lie: for the custom thereof is not good* *; that is, according to the expression of the scripture, it is very bad.

Very prejudicial to young people.

In a word, it is so wicked a quality of the mind to be a liar, that the scripture speaks of it in unusual terms. It says, that *God abhors it*; that *lying lips are an abomination to the Lord* †; as, on the contrary, those who love sincerity in their words gain his friendship. *Thou, O Lord, wilt destroy all that speak a lie* ‡. Lying is infamous among men; *A lie is a foul blot in a man, and yet it will be continually in the mouth of men without discipline. A thief is better than a man that is always lying: but both of them shall inherit destruction* §.

Lastly, This vice makes men resemble the devil, who is the arch-liar. It was he who first invented it, and who is the father thereof, as the Son of God has named him with his mouth ¶.

It makes men like Devils.

St. *Augustine* says, "That as truth comes from God, lying takes its origin from the devil ||." and St. *Ambrose* adds, "That those who love lying are children of that detestable fiend, for the children of God love truth **."

L 2

Fly

* Eccli. vii. 14. † Prov. xii. 22. ‡ Ps. v. 7. § Eccli. xx. 26, 27. ¶ John viii. || Tract. 42. in Job. ** Serm. de Dom. Passionis.

Fly entirely, *Theotime*, this pernicious vice in all occurrences, and chiefly in two.

1. When you speak of a thing of importance, that is, when it prejudices your neighbour in his goods, honour, or eternal welfare, wherein you must be very cautious, and even more than in regard of yourself.

2. When you speak to a person who has authority over you; for then a lie is a very culpable imposture, as well by reason of the respect you then break through, as because it frequently happens, that those falsehoods notably prejudice your own good, or that of your neighbour, which you are obliged to promote when it is in your power.

Lastly, in whatsoever matter it be, and to whatsoever person you speak, accustom yourself never to tell a lie on purpose, or with reflection. Love truth and sincerity in all your words. What an excellent quality is it in a young man, when he cannot tell an untruth without blushing! *The just*, says the wise man, *shall hate a lying word* *. Beg of God that he give you a hatred of this sin, and frequently offer to him that prayer of *Solomon*; *Remove far from me vanity, and lying words* †.

C H A P. XIII.

Of Sobriety.

YOUNG man exhort to be sober ‡, says the Apostle St. Paul to Titus his disciple. Sobriety, *Theotime*, in the judgment of this great Apostle, is necessary for youth: and although by this name of sobriety he comprehends generally the moderation of the heat and impetuosity of that age, which is naturally carried to an excess in all things; nevertheless he means also particularly moderation in eating and drinking, the contrary of which is very common in youth, and extremely prejudicial to them.

As sobriety consists in the moderation of eating and drinking, it has two vices to combat with, drunkenness and gluttony, both highly prejudicial to youth: for these two vices are declared enemies to good breeding, health, vigour of mind, and salvation.

There is nothing so unseemly in young men, as to be subject to wine or gluttony. Discreet persons have an aversion to this vice, both in themselves and others.

We see by experience how wine and delicious meats prejudice the health, principally of young people; how the excess of the one or other causes distempers and infirmities, which often remain with them all their life, and bring them to their grave before their time;

* Prov. xiii. 5. † Prov. xxx. 8. ‡ Tit. ii. 6.

time; whereas, on the contrary, sobriety preserves health and life. *In many meats there will be sickness, and greediness will turn to choler. By surfeiting many have perished: but he that is temperate shall prolong life*.*

As for the mind, who is there that does not know how these two vices are contrary to it? We daily see, that persons addicted to gluttony become stupid, gross, and carnal, according to the proverb cited by St. *Jerome* †. “A fat belly never produces a witty mind;” and those who love drink become dull, brutish, and incapable of any good.

But as for thy salvation, *Theotime*, it is incredible how these two vices are hurtful to it; for *sins.*

besides the sins of intemperance, which are committed in the excess of eating and drinking, which are in great number, and frequently very enormous, these two vices cause a vast multitude of others; as anger, quarrels, swearing, blaspheming, immodest discourses ‡, and amongst others the sin of impurity, which intemperance enkindles in the heart, and particularly of young men, furnishing continually new fuel to that fire of immodesty, which concupiscence and the heat of that age incessantly enflames. “It is very difficult (says St. *Jerome*) to preserve chastity “in the midst of banquets; and wine joined with youth doubles “the burning flame of sensuality §.”

To fly entirely these two vices, and to acquire and preserve sobriety, you are to observe three things in eating and drinking, quantity, quality, and modesty.

As for the quantity, have a care never to commit any excess either in the one or the other, keeping yourself always as much as you can within the bounds of sufficiency and decency. It is the property of carnal and ill-instructed minds, to eat without measure and rule, and to fill themselves with meat without restraint.

In the quality there are three things to be avoided; delicious meats, prejudicial to health, and such as provoke impurity, as all hot spiced meats, and wine, which St. *Jerome* says, “Is poison to youth, “and the first means the devil makes use of to tempt them to “uncleanness ||.”

As for modesty in meals, to eat with greediness, to devour all the table with one's eyes, to seek to please one's palate, to speak of nothing but sweet bits, to be the first in eating, and the last in leaving off, are things absolutely inconsistent with decency and temperance: the wise man gives you very opposite precepts.

Art thou set at a great table? be not the first to open thy mouth upon it. Say not: there are many things which are upon it. Stretch not out thy hand first, lest being disgraced with envy thou be put to confusion. Be not hasty in a feast. Use as a frugal man the things that are set before

* Eccli xxxvii. 33, 34. † Ad Nepot. ‡ Eccli. xxxi. § Lib. 2. Ep. 9. Ep. ad Furian.

*before thee : lest if thou eatest much, thou be hated. Leave off first, for manners sake, and exceed not, lest thou offend *.* You must pay great attention to these precepts of temperance, since they come from the Holy Ghost himself.

In short, *Theotime*, be careful not to frequent the company of those who are addicted to wine and guttony, according to the counsel of the same wise man †; fly the places destined to that use, as taverns : especially if you be inclined to intemperance, use all your endeavours to restrain and correct it, by calling to mind that *he that loves good cheer, shall be in want : he that loves wine and fat things shall not be rich ‡.* He means principally the riches of the mind, which are wisdom and virtue.

Beseech God to take away from you all affection to these sensual and carnal things, which never satisfy, and serve only to pamper that body, which God will one day destroy, and which will become meat for worms § : such things render the mind brutish, incapable of relishing what is heavenly ||, and of entertaining serious thoughts of salvation ¶.

C H A P. XIV.

Of meekness in opposition to anger.

AS young men are extremely addicted to sensuality, so they are excessively impatient under the least contradiction. These two predominant passions of youth, precipitate them into all kinds of disorder. Take a view of all the vices and extravagances of youth, consider all the misfortunes that befall them, and you will find they spring from one of these two causes, either from the love of pleasures, or from anger, and often from both together. These are the two means the devil employs to destroy young men, being well assured, that if one succeeds not, the other will never fail. It is frequently seen, that he ruins by anger those he cannot gain by pleasures, hurrying them by that impetuous passion into most deplorable misfortunes.

Wherefore, *Theotime*, as it is most important for you to overcome this love of pleasures, so natural to your age, of which we have hitherto spoken ; so it is necessary for you to labour to repress those motions of anger, according to that excellent precept the wise man gives you ; *Remove anger from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh, that is to say, pleasure **.*

There

* Eccli. xxxi. 12. 13. 16, 17, 19, 20. † Prov. xxiii. 20. ‡ Prov. xxiv. 17.
§ 1 Cor. vi. 13. || 1 Cor. ii. 14. ¶ Luke xxi. 34. Eccles. xi. 10.

There are so many reasons that induce us to fly anger, that it is truly surprising to see it so common among men. I beseech you, *Theotime*, weigh attentively these which follow. *Powerful reasons to fly anger.*

1. Anger is a brutish passion, which renders men like beasts : for what is there more like a brute, than a man who cannot suffer the least thing ? Beasts fly at every thing that hurts them, because they have no reason ; and if you stir up yourself against every thing that displeases you, in what are you different from a beast ? and what does your reason avail you ?

2. Anger usually proceeds from a want of wisdom, or from a weakness of mind, which can suffer or dissemble nothing, and discerns not the things which deserve rebuke, from those which do not. If then you be inclined to anger, you betray a weak mind, and more folly than discretion. This is the judgment of the wise man, who says, *A fool immediately sheweth his anger* * : He therefore gives you this excellent admonition, *be not quickly angry : for anger resteth in the bosom of a fool* † ; that is, anger is suitable and natural to ill-bred minds.

3. Anger clouds the judgment and reason, and renders a man incapable of discerning good from bad, true from false, useful from unprofitable. It makes one frequently take the one for the other, so that a man in anger has nothing but the exterior shape and figure of a man.

4. The exterior itself is in such a manner changed, that it disfigures a man ; his eyes strike fire, his countenance pale, his speech interrupted, his body trembling, his clamours, and other like alterations, are the effects of anger, which makes a man as it were outrageous.

5. From thence it comes, that a man in anger is insupportable to all the world, every one dreads and abandons him, even his friends fly from him. *A spirit that is easily angered*, says the wise man, *who can bear* ‡ ? *A stone is heavy and sand weighty : but the anger of a fool is heavier than them both* §.

6. How many are the sad effects of anger ? *The bad effects of anger.* from thence quarrels, injuries, detractions, enmities, desires of revenge, oaths, blasphemies, and a thousand other sins which it occasions. *He that is easily stirred up to wrath, shall be more prone to sin* ¶. From thence the ruin of friendship among friends, inward grudges, irreconcilable discords ; from thence many misfortunes, revenge, blows, duels, dreadful and miserable deaths.

Lastly, Anger is absolutely contrary to the spirit of Christianity. *Whoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment* ||. *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart* **. *Charity*, says St. Paul, *is patient, is kind, is not provoked to anger* ††. *Let all bitterness*

* Prov. xii. 16. † Eccles. vii. 10. ‡ Prov. xviii. 14. § Prov. xxvii. 3.
¶ Prov. xxix. 22. || Mat. v. 22. ** Mat. xi. 29. †† 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5.

terness and anger, and indignation and clamour, and blasphemy be put away from you *.

Remedies against anger.

If you be possessed by this passion, *Theotime*, use all your endeavours to overcome it: and for this intent read attentively the following maxims, and endeavour to practise them.

1. Never be provoked upon small occasions: for example, if one says some slighting words to you, or does something that displeases you; if a servant be wanted to wait on you punctually; to be enraged on such occasions is an indiscretion, and the effect of an irregular mind.

2. If the ill you have received be considerable, before you be troubled for it, consider what you ought to do to remedy it, and you will find that to grow angry would be the worst for that purpose; and if it be unprofitable, it is a folly to vex yourself. For example, one has given you injurious words, or spoken ill of you; if you fall into a passion you will not repair the injury nor the detraction; you must then seek some lawful means of redress, or bear it in the true spirit of a Christian, to be *meek and humble of heart*; this is the best remedy.

3. Suppose it be proper sometimes to manifest some discontent for the evil another has done you, to hinder him from doing the same again, because, according to the wise man, *By the sadness of the countenance the mind of the offender is corrected* †; yet it can never be lawful, either to conceive anger in one's heart, or to brawl, storm, affront, or reproach. On the contrary, it lessens your reason for complaint if you have any; and it is against virtue, because in all this you offend God.

4. Be then always upon your guard to prevent anger when you see it approaching. But if it should sometimes get the start, before you have been able to avoid it, endeavour to return quickly to yourself, and to be easily appeased. Generous minds are soon pacified.

St. *Jerome* observes ‡, “That it is natural to a man to be angry, “but it is the property of a Christian to keep it within bounds.” St. *Ambrose* § relates of the Emperor *Theodosius* the Great, “That he “was so much inclined to meekness, that he esteemed himself obliged very much when one asked pardon, and when he was angry, “he was most ready to pardon; so that one desired in him, what “was feared in others, *viz.* that he should be angry.” O what an excellent example is this, and how deserving of our imitation!

5. When you have given way to passion, impose some punishment upon yourself, as prayer, alms, or other things; and express a trouble for it to those who saw you.

6. There

* Eph. iv. 31. † Eccles. vii. 4. ‡ Ep. ad Demetr. § De obitu Theod.

6. There is scarce any person but says or does something in his anger of which repents afterwards. When therefore you shall be in choler, restrain yourself as much as you can from saying or doing any thing which passion suggests. Never believe yourself when you are in a passion ; wait till it be past, to judge whether a thing be ill spoken or done, and you will often find that it was not.

7. Entertain not your thoughts with the subject of your displeasure, to persuade yourself that you have just cause to be angry ; this is but to cherish your passion : there is none but thinks he has a just reason to indulge passion. On the contrary, persuade yourself that you may be deceived, and turn your mind to something else. When your passion is over, your judgment will be less prejudiced, and often far different from what it was during your anger.

8. If you desire to have an aversion to anger, consider another attentively when he is in passion ; you will see nothing in him and his actions, but what will displease you. The same happens to you in respect of others when you are angry : and if you should see yourself in a looking-glass, you would be vexed at yourself, and would not endure yourself in that condition.

9. Fly the conversation of impatient and cholerick men, according to that excellent precept of the wise man, *Be not a friend to an angry man, lest perhaps thou learn his ways* *.

In a word, accustom yourself to be affable and mild towards others, to excuse their faults, to forget injuries, to pardon easily, not to be exceptionous and peevish, but to speak mildly to all. Learn in good time, *Theotime*, the practice of that divine sentence of *Jesus Christ*, *learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart* †.

C H A P XV.

Of peace with our neighbour, against quarrels and enmities.

ANGER produces quarrels, enmities, and other bad effects which we have spoken of. Now it is important that you should be well instructed concerning these bad effects of this wicked cause, seeing that young men are much subject to these disorders. The heat of their age makes them impatient to suffer the least injuries, indiscreet and inconsiderate to repress them any other ways than by those of passion, which leads them to dissensions, enmities, and revenge. From hence arise a vast number of mischiefs, and among others the ruin of virtue ; for where there is no peace there can be no charity, nor consequently virtue. And as the Apostle St. James says, *Where envying and contention is, there is inconstancy and every evil work* ‡.

Young people are much subject to quarrels.

It

* Prov. xxii. 24, 25. † Matt. xi. 29. ‡ Jam. iii. 16.

It is a rock which, with all possible care, you must avoid, learning in good time to hate quarrels and enmities, and to love peace and concord : for if you have not a peaceable spirit, the God of peace will not be with you *.

To acquire and preserve this peaceable spirit, you must beware of three things. 1. Not to quarrel with any person. 2. Not to give occasion to others to quarrel with you. 3 To behave yourself discreetly when any one has a difference with you.

1. Raise not therefore quarrels with others, upon any consideration. There are some people naturally quarrelsome, who are always at variance with others ; impatient, unable to suffer ; rash and inconsiderate, always guided by a fantastical humour, and not by reason. It is a wicked and pernicious quality, the mark of a weak mind : for as the wise man says, *The lips of a fool intermeddle with strife : and his mouth provoketh quarrels* †. Be not you such an one, *Theotime*. *It is an honour for a man, to separate himself from quarrels ; but all fools are meddling with reproaches* ‡. I speak not of another sort of quarrelsome persons, who through malice and a very wicked inclination seek quarrels, and take a pleasure in raising them, and making themselves enemies : these are ungracious men, who seek their own ruin, and find it at length, *An evil man always seeketh quarrels : but a cruel angel shall be sent against him* § ; that is, the devil will bring him some disaster which will destroy him.

2. It will not suffice to avoid quarrelling with our neighbour, unless we also prevent giving any occasion of offence ; which is sometimes purposely given by froward and spiteful persons, lovers of disturbance, and enemies to peace, but most frequently through imprudence, for want of preventing what might provoke your neighbour. Endeavour therefore to abstain from every thing that may disgust your neighbour, as direct contradictions, indiscreet reports, contempts, scoffs, injuries, and a thousand other like things, the perpetual source of quarrels and misunderstandings among young people.

3. If it should happen that any one quarrels with you, even when you gave no occasion on your part, endeavour to behave discreetly, not permitting yourself to be carried away with the passion of anger, but mildly yet resolutely repressing it. Above all suffer not yourself to go so far as injuries or reproaches : strive to appease your neighbour with mildness, according to the advice of the wise man, *A mild answer breaketh wrath : but a harsh word stirreth up fury* ||. Show modestly that you have done him no wrong, or excuse yourself mildly if you have offended him ; if he be not then pacified, withdraw yourself from his company, to let his anger cool.

But

* 2 Cor. xiii. 11. † Prov. xviii. 6. ‡ Prov. xx. 3. § Prov. xvii. 11. || Prov. xv. 1.

But you will say, they will contemn me, and account me a coward. I answer, that none but weak minds will do so, as on the contrary, all discreet men will praise you for your moderation, and esteem you much more. If courage consisted in quarrelling, and returning injury for injury, litigious persons, and all base souls, would be more courageous than you. Courage consists in despising injuries, modestly dissembling, readily excusing, and discreetly avoiding them when we can, and when we cannot, in supporting them with Christian patience after the example and for the love of our Saviour, *Who, when he was reviled, did not revile: when he suffered, he threatened not* †. This, *Theotime* is the courage of a well-bred mind, the generosity of a true Christian, and of a faithful servant of God.

Answer to a common objection.

C H A P. XVI.

Of pardoning injuries, against revenge.

THERE is yet a necessary thing for preserving peace and meekness towards our neighbour, which is the pardon of injuries. It is a virtue which must be learned betimes, by so much sooner as it is more difficult, very rare amongst Christians, yet absolutely necessary for salvation.

You must learn, dear *Theotime*, to forgive the injuries done you by others; that is, never to harbour in your mind any hatred against your neighbour, whatever displeasure you have received from him, nor to have any desire of revenge, nor wish him any ill; but on the contrary, desire his good, and shew him kindness, when his necessity, or the edification of others requires it.

We must learn from our youth to pardon injuries.

You will say that it is difficult. It is true, but it is only hard to those who have never considered the reasons which oblige them to it; which are so strong and powerful, that they, who after ever so little reflection on them are not convinced, must needs have lost all their sense and judgment.

Strong reasons to enforce the pardon of injuries.

1. God will have it so, and absolutely without any exception commands it. He has said in the Old Testament, *Seek not revenge, nor be mindful of the injury of thy citizens* *. And in the New, his Son *Christ Jesus* has solemnly renewed the prohibition. *I say to you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you* †. *Render to no man evil for evil*, says *St. Paul* ‡. *Whoever hateth his brother*, says *St. John*, *is a murderer* §.

2 He commands it in such a manner, that he will not pardon your sins, except you, from your heart, pardon all those who have offended

* 1 Pet. ii. 23. † Lev. xix. 18. ‡ Mat. v. 44. § Rom. xii. 17 || 1 John iii. 15.

offended you. *Forgive, and you shall be forgiven*, says the Son of God; *For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again* *. *If you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences* †. *Judgment without mercy*, says the Apostle St. James, *to him that hath not done mercy* ‡. Consider this well, and see whether you would not have God pardon you.

3. This will of God is grounded on so manifest a point of equity, that even the most obstinate cannot contradict it. Is there any thing more just, than that God should treat you as you treat others? that he should forgive you as you forgive others? that he should revenge himself of you, if you will be revenged of those who have offended you? Is not this just? Weigh well, *Theotime*, what I am going to say. You would have God infinite in

A point to be well considered. majesty and power, offended, by whom? by his own creature, after he had bestowed upon it all imaginable favours; offended most grievously, and with an infinite offence, for which neither you nor all creatures together, although you should join your lamentations with them for all eternity, could know how to make him proper satisfaction; in short, injured by an offence which deserves an eternal damnation, which cannot be avoided but by his pure mercy, which he is not obliged to shew you: you would, I say, desire that a God so great, offended by you so grievously, should pardon you such an offence, and remit you such a punishment; and will not you pardon your brother, one like yourself, a small offence? You, who are a sinner as he is, and who have need of pardon as well as he; you who perhaps have wronged him first, or at least have shewed him no kindness, or if you have it is not to be compared with what God has shewn you; nay, moreover, that favour you have done him came not from you, but from God: will you, I say, after all these considerations seek revenge and satisfaction for your offence, and will not have God revenge himself of you? are not you unjust, yea, even ridiculous? *One man keepeth anger against another, and doth he seek to be healed by God? He hath no mercy on a man like himself, and doth he intreat for his own sins? He that is but flesh, nourishing anger, and doth he ask forgiveness of God? Who, says the wise man, shall obtain pardon for sins* §?

After this, *Theotime*, what have you to answer? will you say that it is hard to pardon? *An answer to a common objection* say also, that it is hard to obtain pardon of your sins from God. Will you say, that you will not? Say likewise, that you will not ask pardon of God! Say no longer in the Lord's prayer, *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us*, but, *take vengeance of me, as I do of those who have offended me*. Weigh this well, *Theotime*, and consider what you ought to say and do on this occasion.

But

* Luke vi. 37, 38. † Mat. vi. 15. ‡ Jam. ii. 13. § Eccli. xxviii. 3, 4, 5.

But you will say, I would freely pardon him, and not revenge myself; but I can never prevail upon myself to love and wish him well who has offended me, and would still do me a mischief. If so, grant then that you would not have God love you, nor bestow upon you any blessing; for he will treat you as you treat your neighbour. Say that you will not love another like yourself, for the love of *Jesus Christ*, who has loved you so as to die for your salvation when you were his enemy; and that God having loved you when you were unworthy, you will not love your brother, except he be worthy of your love. Say that you will not love your neighbour for the love of God, but for the love of yourself only. And although God commands you to love him who has offended you, exhorts you to it, and accounts the love you render to one like you, as done to his own person; yet all this is not capable of making you quit the resentment and hatred you bear in your heart. Say, in short, that you do not wish to obtain the grace of God, and eternal life, since the scripture teaches us, that *We have passed from death to life; because we love the brethren. He that loveth not, abideth in death* *.

Let us conclude, *Theotime*, that either we must renounce Christianity, the love of God, and eternal salvation, or we must necessarily pardon injuries, love our enemies, and render good for evil. But as this virtue is difficult through the corruption of nature and the depravity of mankind, which cannot relish it, you must learn it in good time, and beg it frequently of God. Implore him that he would give you a meek and peaceable heart, rendering good for evil. Accustom yourself from your youth to pardon small injuries, not to render evil for evil, that you may learn to pardon great ones if ever offered, for the love of him who has saved you, when he might most justly have destroyed you for all eternity †.

C H A P. . XVII.

Of the love of our neighbour.

THIS virtue is the mother of the three former, and those who are destitute of it, fall into all the disorders we have spoken of in the three last chapters: for anger, dissensions, animosities, revenge, spring only from the want of charity, and because we love not our neighbour in a Christian manner, and as God commands us to love him.

It is of the greatest importance, that you be instructed in this virtue, because it is a fundamental virtue of Christianity, which is established upon these two laws, *Love God above all things, and your neighbour as yourself*; yet very rare, and ill complied with by Christians.

The

* 1 Joh. iii. 14. † St. Ambrose or. de obitu Theodosii.

A common error concerning the love of our neighbour.

The generality of Christians believe, that to love their parents, their friends, and those from whom they expect any favour, is sufficient without the least regarding the rest of mankind. This is not to love our neighbour, but ourselves. Children from their youth are bred up in this opinion; they are taught only to love those who do them good, and hate those who do them hurt. From hence arise all the animosities which disfigure the face of Christendom, the harshness which men treat one another, and the little support they either mutually give or receive in their respective necessities: whence arises too great a propensity to quarrels, injuries, ill treatments, hatred, and revenge.

It is highly necessary to disabuse young persons of this common error, and to instruct them in this virtue so necessary for salvation.

Three things to be known in the love of our neighbour.

This error proceeds from the ignorance of three things which ought to be known in this virtue; that is, who are our neighbours, the motive for which they must be loved, and in what this love consists.

1. *Who he is* Our neighbours who must be loved are all men, even the most unknown great and mean, poor and rich, good and bad, friend and foe.
2. *The motive to love him.* The motive for which they must be loved, is, because they are the children of God, created to his image, redeemed by the blood of his Son *Jesus Christ*; because God, who is our common Father, and because *Jesus Christ*, who is our common Saviour, has commanded us to love them.
3. *In what it consists.* This love consists in three things: in wishing good to all; in doing it when we can, both in temporals and spirituals; in bearing with their defects, and excusing their faults.

This is, *Theotime*, true charity, which is one of the foundations of virtue, the mark of a Christian spirit, without which we cannot please God, nor have any real virtue; to attain to this degree of charity, you must aim at it from your most tender infancy.

Practice.

1. *To desire good to all.* Accustom yourself to consider all men as your brethren, and in this quality to desire good to all of them. Be meek and benevolent to all; have compassion on the poor and afflicted; be not envious at the rich, and those in prosperity: love the good by reason of their virtue; the wicked, that they may become good; desiring the perseverance of the former, and the conversion of the latter. We must hate sin, which is the work of man; but love man who is the work of God.
2. *To procure it when we can.* Seeing it is nothing to wish one good, unless we do it when we can; use yourself to be ready and inclined to do good to your neighbour

bour when you can. Now there are three sorts *Three sorts of good.*
of good which we may procure to our neighbour; in his body, in his honour, and in his soul.

As for the first, assist others in their necessities, according to the power and opportunities you have: give alms freely to the poor. What an excellent virtue in a young man is mercy and compassion for the poor! Happy those who can say with *Job*, *From my infancy mercy grew up with me* *. Because it will draw down many divine blessings upon them during their life, and at the hour of their death, as it is said in the scripture. Read the fourth chap. of *Tobias*.

1. *Corporal.*

As for their reputation, you ought to preserve it for your neighbour as much as possible. Hinder calumnies and detractions. If one be accused of a wickedness which he has not done, defend him and say that it is not so. If the ill he has done be discovered, endeavour to excuse him, and hinder its being spoken of any more: speak of some other good he has done, or some good quality he is endowed with: show that detraction displeases you, and exhort him who utters it, to spare the reputation of his neighbour.

2. *Moral.*

As for the good of the soul, which consists in virtue and salvation, since it is the greatest of all good, you must use all possible means to procure it for your neighbour. You will perform this by praying for him, by endeavouring to withdraw him from vice, and sinful occasions, if he be in them, either by yourself, or by others who can prevail with him, by mildly putting him in mind of his duty, or causing him to be admonished. Accustom yourself to do all these things to them who are nearest to you, as your friends, your companions, your servants, and to those with whom you converse. This is the true love of our neighbour, to love him for his salvation and eternity.

3. *Spiritual.*

3. There remains a third thing necessary for the love of our neighbour, which is charitably to bear with his defects, and excuse his faults, as much as prudence will permit; not to be apt to blame and reprehend, either without knowledge, or with bitterness, or without any necessity or advantage. Now there is no necessity or advantage, when the reprehension does not avail for the amendment of him who is faulty, nor for the edification of others.

To bear with his defects.

In a word, *Thestime*, the great rule of the love of our neighbour consists in judging by ourselves, according to the maxim of the wise man, *Judge of the disposition of thy neighbour by thyself* †; and in practising that great maxim of the scripture, which nature herself teaches us, *See thou never do to another what thou would hate to have done to thee by another* ‡. And also do to others the good which rationally, and according to God, you would have done to you on the like

* Job xxxi. 18.

† Eccli. xxxi. 18.

‡ Tob. iv. 15.

like occasion. 'Tis the maxim of our Lord has taught us in those words, *Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them* *.

C H A P. XVIII.

Of fraternal correction, or of the obligation of hindering another's sin, when in our power.

WHAT we have said of the obligation charity imposes upon Christians, of procuring the salvation of our neighbour when we can, deserves a more particular reflection, it being a thing of high importance, and nevertheless infinitely neglected, and for the most part absolutely unknown. It sounds like a new language, and an imaginary duty.

Yet there is nothing more common in the sacred scripture, which teaches us, that *God gave to every one commandment concerning his neighbour* †, that *we should edify one another* ‡, *admonish one another* §. *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*, that is, the sins of another, *but rather reprove them* ||.

To love God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves. For how do we love our neighbour as ourselves, if his greatest necessities, which are those of his salvation, move us so little, that we abandon them for our least interests, which are frequently only fancied and trifling? And how do we love God above all things, if we neglect to prevent his being offended, when in our power.

This obligation is so great, that it has made St. *John Chrysostom* deliver himself in very strong terms, viz. "That God will require
" no less account of us, of the salvation of our neighbour than of
" our own; and that when we shall have lived all our life very
" piously, if we have neglected the salvation of others upon occasions,
" the sanctity of our life will be unprofitable, it being certain, that
" that negligence is so criminal that it alone may be the cause of
" our damnation. He gives the reason, because he who is want-
" ing to assist his neighbour in his corporal necessities, is rejected by
" God at the day of judgment, notwithstanding the good he hath
" otherwise performed: much more he, who neglects to succour
" his brother in a thing of far greater consequence, as is the salva-
" tion of his soul, will deserve all manner of punishments."

The discharge of this great obligation depends upon the practice of the commandment of fraternal correction which our Lord has given us, and whereof he has prescribed the order in Chap. XVIII. of St. *Matthew*: *If thy brother shall offend thee, go, and reprove him*
between

* Matt. vii. 12.

† Eccli. xvii. 12.

‡ 1 Theff. v. 11.

§ Rom. xv. 14.

|| Eph. v. 11.

¶ Adversus vituperatores vitæ Monast. lib. 5.

between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more. And if he will not hear them, tell the Church*.

That you may understand this commandment, so little known, and so ill practised, I shall observe here four or five truths, which will facilitate the understanding and practice of it.

Five things of consequence to be observed in this command.

The first is, the end of this commandment, which is to remedy the misfortune of our neighbour, by preventing our neighbour from relapsing into his fault, or others from offending by his example or inducement.

Its end.

The second is, that this commandment obliges not only superiors, but all sorts of persons, it being a command of charity, "which, (as St. Thomas says) every one is obliged to have."

The persons it obliges.

The third is, that this obligation is understood only when these two circumstances occur: 1. When we know the evil committed, and evident danger of our neighbour relapsing into it, or causing others to fall therein. 2. When we can hinder the evil of another by applying a remedy; for what is not in our power, cannot be commanded.

The circumstances wherein it obliges.

The fourth is, that this power of preventing the mischief, is not only understood of what we ourselves may do, but also of what we may effect by another's means. This is what our Lord has put beyond a doubt, in saying, if he hear not you, take some other person with you; and if he still continue to persist, tell the church.

The fifth remark is, that what he says of telling the church, that is, its superiors, may be informed either privately or publicly; and that when the first way, that is, the secret, suffices to hinder the evil, as ordinarily it does, we are not obliged to the second.

Thus, to collect all these observations, and join them together; the commandment of fraternal correction obliges every one to hinder the evil or sin of another, when he knows it, and can remedy it, by other persons, who may be employed for that end. Whence it follows, that to discharge one's self of the obligation of this commandment, one is obliged to prevent evil by another person when he cannot by himself.

We cannot fail in this duty without a heinous sin, and the neglect of it will be found to be without excuse in the sight of God. Indeed, *Theotime*, is it not highly criminal before God, to see or know any one in danger of losing his soul, and neglect giving the assistance in our power? And to be no more concerned to his neighbour from mortally offending God, when he can, than to divert him from drinking a glass of water? *He that bath the substance of this*

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world

* Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17.

world, (says St. John) and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him; how doth the charity of God abide in him*. If this be so in corporal necessities, what will it be in spiritual? St. Chrysostom says †, “it is an excessive cruelty to neglect thus a neighbour. And if it be an inhumanity not to help to raise a beast fallen under his burthen, how can it but be the utmost cruelty not to do that for the soul of his brother, which men do for brute beasts?” “A beast fallen (says St. Bernard) finds those who raise it; a soul is lost, and no one is concerned ‡.”

“If the old law (says St. Chrysostom §) strictly commanded not to neglect the ox of our enemy when he is found strayed, but to bring him back to his master; what pardon ought he to expect, who neglects and abandons not a strayed ox of his enemy, but the soul of his brother-christian lost in sin.”

“If your brother (says St. Austin ¶) had a mortal wound upon his body, which he would conceal for fear of incision, would it not be an inhumanity in you to conspire by your silence with him in his design? As, on the contrary, you would shew him a great kindness, to discover his misfortune to a physician, that a remedy may be applied. With how much more reason ought you to do the same things for the wounds of the soul, since they are far more fatal if neglected, and permitted to putrify in the heart, by hastening death, and infecting others with their stench.”

If you should see the beginning of a fire, which you might easily put out, either by yourself or at least by warning others who might do it, would you not be guilty of all the mischief if you were defective therein? From this comparison judge of your own guilt, if, knowing your own neighbour's sin, you keep it a secret from those who might put a stop to it. Doubtless, you are answerable to God for all the evil your neighbour commits, which by a secret and charitable admonition you might have prevented. How many mortal sins are there committed in consequence of such negligence as this?

Consider, *Theotime*, and weigh well all these reasons. What would you answer to God in this dreadful judgment, if through remissness, vain fear, or a sinful complaisance, as it frequently happens, you should be so unhappy as to fall into that criminal neglect? What reason could you alledge for such neglect? What can be equal to the salvation of a soul, or one mortal sin which you might have prevented? What will you say when you shall be reproached, that you had a greater apprehension of displeasing your neighbour, than God; and that frequently, through indiscretion, anger, or malice, you were not afraid to divulge that, which you would not discover secretly through charity? But what will you answer when it shall be made to appear, that you might have often hindered the wickedness of another, without any danger, and that

* 1 John iii. 17.

† De ferendis reprehensionibus.

‡ Hom. 4 in 1 Cor.

§ Hom. 4 in 1 Cor. ¶ Ep. 109.

you had only an imaginary fear, or rather a great slackness, or foolish complaisance, which has hindered you from it? You will then see yourself partaker of the sins of another, and charged with many faults which you might have hindered, and which were caused by your silence: God will exact an account of them from you.

You must avoid this misfortune, *Theotime*; and to this end, practise what the Son of God has prescribed us. When you see any one offend God mortally, as by swearing, lewd discourse, or bad example, or know of any infamous behaviour, endeavour to divert him from it, if you can, by your mild and charitable admonitions. If you cannot, as not having sufficient courage to do it, or sufficient authority to hinder it, do what our Lord appoints you, employ discreetly other persons therein, which you know can perform it better than you, and particularly those who have the conduct of him, whom you know to have gone astray.

This is the rule which St. *Augustine*, after our Lord, gives on this occasion, in the 109th epistle, where he adds these excellent words, which are inserted in the canon law: "Believe not, (says he) that it is to do hurt to your neighbour, to discover thus his wickedness, with a desire of remedying it: on the contrary, you are guilty of his ruin, if when you might heal his evil by declaring it to the physician, you permit him to perish by your silence."

Now if we must act thus even when our neighbour's sin hurts but himself alone, we are much more obliged when it prejudices others, whether by ill example, or his wicked discourse; for when we must desist from private remonstrances, which can avail nothing, and go directly to them who can, and ought to watch for the good and salvation of others, that we may prevent by them the mischief, and hinder the ruin of another, or of many.

My Brethren, says St. *James*, if any one of you err from the truth, and one convert him: he must know, that he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins*.

C H A P. XIX.

Of friendships.

I SPEAK here of friendships, because they conduce much to bring youth to good or evil, according as they are good or bad; and since young people are much inclined to love, and besides, not having sufficient light to discern good friendships from hurtful, it often falls out that they contract very bad friendships, which prejudice them very much, and are most commonly the cause of their ruin.

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* Jam. v. 19, 20.

There is a difference between the love of our neighbour and friendship. We must love all men in the manner we have said, but we cannot have friendship with all men, because friendship is a mutual and particular love.

What friendship is. It is a reciprocal communication of affections, by which two persons particularly love one another, and mutually procure good to one another.

Friendship is such as is the subject on which it is founded; if we love in a friend a wicked thing, the friendship is bad and vicious. If we love a vain and frivolous thing, as beauty, good behaviour, the friendship is frivolous and foolish. If we love a good thing, the friendship is good and laudable. Now this good thing must be a real virtue, or a perfection which may advance virtue, as science, fine arts and the like.

Three conditions of friendship to be good. Friendship, to be good and real, ought to have three conditions: it must be founded upon virtue, tending to virtue, and conducted by virtue.

1. It must be built upon virtue, that is, we must love a friend by reason of some good and laudable quality, which we discover in him.

2. Tending to virtue, because friendship ought to desire and procure the good of a friend. Now virtue is the greatest and most necessary of all goods; and the friendship by which friends procure favours to one another, if it neglect mutually to advance virtue according to its power, is not a friendship, but a manifest deceit.

3. It ought to be directed by virtue, that is, virtue ought to be the rule of it, and one friend should do nothing for another which may be contrary to virtue. Friendship which causes God to be offended for a friend's sake, is a detestable and cursed friendship, because it makes one love man more than God.

By these three conditions, *Theotime*, you will easily discern good friendship from evil, and that which you ought to fly, from that you ought to seek.

You ought to fly the friendship of those in whom you find no virtue, nor any perfection which you may love, as especially the friendship of those you know to be subject to any vice, as to impurity, drunkenness, swearing, whose friendship will make you learn their wicked qualities; because, as the wise man says, *A friend of fools, that is, of vicious people, shall become like them* *.

Fly all friendship which does not tend to your improvement. Such is the friendship of those who search after nothing in your love but their own profit, or some vain complacency they take in loving you, or being beloved by you; of those, who when they can, do not advise you for your good and your salvation. But above all, abhor the friendship of those who solicit you to sin, or flatter and cherish you in your vices. You ought to avoid these friends, as your greatest and most mortal enemies.

Avoid

Avoid the company of all those who scruple not to offend God for your sake, and to please you; for example, to rob, to cheat, to quarrel, to swear, to detract, to treat ill their neighbour, to challenge in a duel, and other such like things. Have a horror of these friendships, and account that maxim for certain, that "He who is unfaithful to God, cannot be a friend to a man *;" and although he might, yet you cannot adhere to that friendship, without making yourself an enemy to God.

On the contrary, seek after the friendship of those whom you know to be well disposed, and endowed with some good qualities, by which you may profit; who will move you to virtue by their example and good discourses, who will assist you therein by their counsels, not flatter you in your vices, but freely and charitably admonish you, according to that fine observation of the wise man; *Better are the wounds of a friend, than the deceitful kisses of an enemy †.* In a word, those who in their friendship have the fear of God for their rule, and your greatest and most desirable good, which is your amendment and salvation for their principal end. These, *Theotime*, are the good and true friendships you must by so much more seek after, as they are most rare, and carefully entertain when you have found them. These are the friendships whereof the wise man speaks, when he says, *A faithful friend is a strong defence: and he that hath found him hath found a treasure. No weight of gold and silver is able to countervail the goodness of his fidelity. A faithful friend is the medicine of life and immortality.* Love and seek after such a friendship, which when you have met with, adhere to it carefully, and abandon it not through levity, as young people ordinarily do.

To find this friendship, remember first, to implore it often of God, who is the author of it. *They that fear the Lord*, says the wise man, *shall find that friend §.* In the second place, be careful to love first; for you must love to be beloved: but this love must be such an one as is built upon virtue, tending to virtue, and directed by virtue.

C H A P. XX.

Of sports and recreations.

RECREATION is necessary to relax the spirits, and particularly of young people; and that which is taken in innocent diversion is most proper for them, it being more proportioned to their nature, and the capacity of their mind.

Pastime then and recreation is not contrary to virtue, but rather commanded; and it is an act of virtue when it is done as it ought.

To

* S. Amb. 3 Offic. cap. 19.
Eccli. vi. 16.

† Prov. xxvii. 6.

‡ Eccli. vi. 14, 15, 16.

The motive of sport. To be such, it is necessary above all things that the motive be good; that is, that it be taken to recreate the mind, and to make it more capable of labour, which it could not be able to undergo, if it were always employed. So that labour is the end and motive of sport and recreation, for which it is designed. We recreate ourselves on account of the fatigue we have undergone, and in order to undergo more.

Three conditions to be observed.

From thence three conditions follow, which must be observed in pastime, that it may be good and virtuous.

Moderation.

The first, to observe moderation; for excess herein renders it no longer a recreation, but rather an employment; it would not then be taken to prepare us for new labour, which is the sole end pastime ought to have, but merely for our pleasure, which is a vicious end; yea, it is to make one unfit for labour, because excess in amusement dissipates the spirits, enfeebles the strength of the body, and oftentimes considerably prejudices the health by the distempers it causes.

An orderly affection.

The second condition is, not to have a disorderly affection for amusements, as it happens frequently to young persons. This affection makes them fall into the excess just mentioned, lose much time, and think continually of the means of dissipation. It generally prevents their applying themselves seriously to labour, and when their body is at study, their mind is bent upon their sport and divertisement.

Avoiding games of hazard.

The third condition is, to fly as much as possible from games of hazard, which enslave the minds principally of youth, and instead of refreshing the spirits, load them with anxiety: one is there so deeply concerned in losing or winning, that it is hard to observe moderation. They play there only out of covetousness and for gain, which is a criminal motive;

The bad effects of play.

consider also the ordinary losses one suffers, which leave after them displeasure, vexation, and despair: add to these cheats, unjust gain, choler, swearing, quarrels, with which these sorts of games are ordinarily attended; the great loss of time, the dissipation of mind and loss of property, the sinful habits of anger, of impatience, of swearing, of lying, of covetousness, a neglect of duty to God and their family, an adherence to bad company, an aversion to what is serious, and a love to be idle and to make their life but a change of succession of idleness. Such an unhappy inclination to play frequently continues all their life, to the ruin of their wealth and honour, and reduces them to the utmost misery, as we daily see by too many examples, and in short, makes a man incapable of any good.

Avoid

Avoid all prohibited games, *Theotime*, as absolutely inconsistent with your salvation: *Practice.* amuse yourself in some laudable diversion which may serve to unbend the mind, or exercise the body, observing therein the conditions we have spoken of, especially avoiding all excess, which St. *Augustine*, in his confessions *, acknowledged to be one of the causes of the wickedness of his youth. Now this excess is understood not only of the time employed therein, which ought to be well regulated, but also of the money you play for, which ought always to be very little; otherwise you will play for gain, and not for recreation, and the sport will be a rack and disquiet, rather than a diversion. Besides, the money you lose at play would be better employed amongst the poor, whose necessities will cry one day to God against your excesses, and those of all gamesters.

C H A P. XXI.

Of liberality against covetousness.

ALTHOUGH it may seem that covetousness is not an ordinary vice amongst young persons, yet it is very necessary to arm them against this passion, which once taking root, is easily increased, and causes vast disorders in their life. *Youth must be armed against covetousness.*

Covetousness is an inordinate love of money. There are two sorts; the one makes us love money, to heap up treasures, or to make purchases; the other, makes us affect it, to squander and lavish it away in pleasures. The first is but rare amongst young people; but the second is very common, and highly prejudicial. *Two sorts of covetousness.*

Experience verifies this: For as they earnestly love their pleasures, they seek all means of gratifying them, which cannot be effected without money: hence they apply all their endeavours to get it; hence the cheats and tricks they make use of towards their parents, to extort it from them; hence their cozening in play, their hard-heartedness to the poor, and sometimes robberies and unjust ways to procure it. *How common among young persons.*

This passion having thus taken its beginning in youth, easily increases, and strengthening itself by age becomes so deeply rooted, that it can never be hereafter extirpated. It then causes that general disorder amongst Christians, which the Prophet deplors, when he says, that from the least of them even to the greatest all are given to covetousness; *How prejudicial.*

* Lib. 2.

covetousness *; that is, to the irregular love of the things of the world, which St. Paul says, is *the root of all evils* †.

Three causes of This vice takes its origin from three causes
avarice in young spoken of, a disorderly love of pleasure. The
men. second is, the common example of the world,

which they see loves and esteems money above all things, and runs after it with insatiable greediness. The third is the fault of parents, who inspire this love into their children from their tender years, discoursing of nothing but the care of getting their livelihood, if they be mean or poor, or of advancing and aspiring to a higher fortune, if they be rich; teaching thus their children that which St. Cyprian reproaches them for ‡, that is, to *love more their riches than Jesus Christ*; and to labour in such a manner for the goods of this mortal life, that they think little or nothing on those of eternity.

It must be pre- This evil, dear *Theotime*, must be prevented
vented betimes. in good time, and hindered from taking possession of your heart, it being certain, that there is no vice which increases more with age than this, and which becomes more incapable of remedy. For this effect take notice of what I counsel you.

First means. 1. Being, as we have said, that the greatest cause of this covetousness in young people, springs from the love of pleasures, use all your endeavours to overcome that passion, which may be said to be one of the greatest evils of youth, the cause of all their misfortunes, and the chief obstacle to salvation. Pass not from this place without making reflections upon it, and thinking how necessary it is to restrain and subdue that early springing forth passion, the love of pleasures.

Second means. 2. That the love of money may not take possession of your soul, think often of that maxim of St. Paul, that *covetousness is the root of all evils* §. These evils are the sins of the world, as well as its misfortunes, whereof the greatest part springs from this fatal cause, as it would be easy to make appear.

Third means. 3. Be persuaded that riches damn many, be they rich or poor; the rich by the ill use of them, the poor by covetousness. *Know*, says the same Apostle, *that no covetous person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God* ||.

Fourth means. 4. Accustom yourself not to desire money but for your necessities, and for your innocent recreations; and when you lack it, bear that want

* Jer. vi. 13. † 1 Tim. vi. 10. ‡ L. de opere & eleemosyna. § 1 Tim. vi. 10. || Ephes. v. 5.

want with patience, considering how many poor there are who have not necessaries, yet you are not better than they. Above all, never make use of deceit, imposition, nor any other unlawful way of getting it.

5. Avoid certain things which are marks or *Fifth means.* effects of avarice in young people, and which excite it much; as to play for gain, to be too fearful of losing at play, to dispute for a small thing, to keep any thing from another, and much more never to take any thing by stealth, be it what it will, which is, besides the sin, a detestable custom, and of very dangerous consequence.

6. Love the poor, give alms freely, allot some *Sixth means.* part of the money you have for your recreations, to supply their necessities. Is it not a shame in you to be prodigal in your pleasures, in your clothes, in your superfluities, and to be covetous and hard-hearted in regard to the necessities of the poor, who are men like yourself, and probably better than you in the sight of God?

In fine, you are either poor, or of a moderate fortune, or rich.

If you be poor, beg of God the grace to take your poverty with patience, as a penance, and for his love. Confide in his providence, which will never be wanting to his servants. *If God so doth the grass of the field,* according to the saying of our Lord, *how much more you, O ye of little faith?* *Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.* Read the sixth chapter of St. Matthew, from ver. 24.

If your fortune be moderate, endeavour to be content, and not to disquiet yourself by coveting a greater. Call to mind what St. Paul says, *They that will become rich, fall into temptation; and into the snares of the Devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For covetousness is the root of all evils* *.

Wherefore practise the best you can that great maxim which the same Apostle gives to Christians: *Let your manners be without covetousness, contented with such things as you have; for he hath said: I will not leave thee* †.

If you be rich, stand in great fear of the danger to which your riches expose your salvation. *No be to you that are rich,* says the Son of God, *for you have your consolation* ‡. On occasion of a rich young man, he said, that it was very difficult for the rich to be saved. To avoid the danger thereof, read and practise what we have said in the chapter of the obstacles of rich young persons, in Part III. Chap. X.

* 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. † Heb. xiii. 5. ‡ Luke vi. 24.

C H A P. XXII.

Of charity towards the poor.

THERE is no virtue more extolled, nor more earnestly recommended in the Holy Scriptures, than charity to the poor, and compassion for the miseries and necessities of others. In the old law God has so strongly enforced it, that he will not allow any one to be reduced to the necessity of begging*. The pious Tobias † admonishes his son never to turn his face from the poor, assuring him that for so doing, God would never turn his face from him, but assist him in all his necessities. The wise man ‡ cautions you not to disappoint the poor of his alms, nor to turn your eyes from him; not to give him occasion by your refusal, to wish ill to you, because his prayer will be heard; on the contrary, an alms given to the poor, will intercede for him who bestowed it.

In the New Testament nothing is so frequently recommended as alms: the Son of God has declared §, that they shall obtain pardon for sins. He has promised to be bountiful to us if we are so to the poor, and that he will deal with us as we behave to our neighbour ||, St. Paul has said after him, that the alms we give to the poor, are so many sacrifices for obtaining the mercy of God ¶. And St. John, in his 1st Epistle **, assures us, that he who has not compassion for the necessities of his neighbour, cannot say he has charity, or that he loved God; because if he loves God, he would assist his neighbour, whom God had commanded him to love like himself.

But of all that is said in the scripture concerning the giving of alms, nothing more clearly evinces the obligations of it than what the Son of God will say at the day of judgment to the elect, and to the reprobate. To the first he will say: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you; for I was hungry, and you gave me to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink: naked, and you clothed me, &c.* To the reprobate he will say: *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire; for I was hungry and you gave me not to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink, &c.* He adds, that what is given or refused to the poor, is given or refused to him ††.

It is very surprising, that of all the good works which the just shall have done for gaining life everlasting, the Son of God should attribute their salvation to the charity alone, they have exercised towards their neighbour! And that of all the crimes by which the wicked have deserved eternal damnation, he should only point out their hard-heartedness to the sufferings of others! And as the Son of God, the wisdom of the eternal Father, neither did nor said any thing without the strongest reasons, we can assign no other for the expressions he will use at the day of judgment, than that he

* Deut. xv. 4. † Tobias iv. 7. ‡ Eccli. iv. xxix. § Luke xi. 41. || Luke xi. 38. ¶ Heb. xiii. 16. ** Chap. iii. †† Mat. xxv.

would let us see by those words, how great a value he sets upon the charity shewed to others; and that the just by charity deserve a continuation of his grace for their final perseverance; as on the other side, the wicked, through their want of compassion for the wretched, have deserved to be disregarded by God, when involved in the miseries of sin, and being abandoned by him as they abandoned the poor, have died impenitent, and are lost for ever.

I wish that all Christians reflected seriously on these astonishing words of the Son of God, and what will befall them at the day of judgment, if they neglect to assist their neighbour. Then they will see their error; but, alas, it will be too late!

For your part, *Theotime*, who are desirous of labouring betimes in the great affair of salvation, be not displeased if I warn you to prevent so great an evil, and exhort you to accustom yourself from your youth to acts of charity, according to your abilities. Delight in taking compassion on the miseries of others. When you see a poor man, or one in distress, remember he is your equal, and if you do not suffer like him, it is owing to God's great goodness towards you: but, on this account he expects that you imitate him in your behaviour to others, and that you assist them with what he has bestowed upon you, employing for their relief what you lavish away in diversions, and perhaps oftentimes in offending God. Cherish, as you grow up, this amiable virtue of compassion, imitating holy *Job**, who says, that compassion for the miseries of others increased in him from his infancy. In order to a right practice of it, follow exactly the advice *Tobias* gave his son concerning alms; and observe the great advantages he ascribes to this excellent virtue. *My son, give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person: for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly: if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storkest up for thyself a good reward for the day of necessity. For alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the Most High God, to all them that give it.* Weigh well these words, *Theotime*, and imprint them in your mind.

This advice teaches you many things; the first of which is, that young persons are not exempt from the obligation of giving alms.

The second is, that these alms must be given out of your own substance, not out of that of others, whether stolen, or unjustly acquired; but out of what is properly your own, or allowed you for your diversions.

Thirdly, never to behave harshly to the poor, as young persons are too apt to do, who are often strangers to all compassion for the miseries of others, being entirely taken up with their pleasures.

In fine, it teaches you that though your abilities be but small, yet you are not excused from giving to the poor; it lays down a rule,

* Job. xxxi. 18. † Tob. iv. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

rule, which is to proportion your alms to your substance; if considerable, to give largely; if small, to give little, but chearfully. For it is not the largeness of the alms which God regards, but the affection with which it was bestowed; *not how much, but out of how much*. Which is to be understood of those who have but little; for as to the rich, their alms are the standard of their charity, since a rich man, who gives little, shows his compassion for the poor to be very small.

Read attentively, *Theotime*, this advice, and look upon it as particularly designed for your instruction concerning alms, how you ought to behave, and what advantages you may expect from thence: by it you will learn betimes that spirit of compassion for the miseries of others, which is so amiable in youth, and perpetually draws down the blessings of heaven. You must not alledge that you have no other money but what is allowed you to spend, for it is out of that you are to give charity, depriving yourself of some little pleasure, that the necessities of the poor may be relieved. Two good works will arise from hence; you will assist the poor, and deprive yourself of some pleasure, which may contribute to atone for your sins.

C H A P. XXIII.

Of humility.

I HAVE reserved this virtue for the last, as that which gives perfection to all others, and which is necessary to preserve, and make them increase.

Pride creeps easily into young minds. Pride, an inordinate esteem of one's self, is most pernicious to all men, but particularly to young persons; it naturally creeps into their mind, according as they advance in age, in virtue, in science, or such other perfections which they have, or think they have; it makes them incapable of all good impressions, and opens the way to all sorts of vices.

Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words; for from it all perdition took its beginning, says the holy man *Tobias* to his son *.

I say unto you also, *Theotime*, preserve yourself from pride, permit it not to take possession of your mind, banish it from you. Humility is necessary for you, in suppressing the opposite vice, the cause of so much evil: Not humility of behaviour or words, but a true solid, - interior humility; an humility, which renders you humble in these three ways, in yourself, towards God, and towards men.

Three sorts of humility.

* Tob. iv. 14.

1. Be humble in yourself, that is, in your own esteem; conceiving no inordinate esteem for yourself, according to that just remark of the wise man *, value not yourself for any thing whatsoever, neither for your riches, nor for your quality, nor beauty, nor good behaviour; for the pride one takes in these things are mean and impertinent, and belongs only to vain minds; not for your wit or knowledge, for these are the gifts of God, and you offer him an injury when you arrogate to yourself esteem from thence; much less for virtue, for it springs far less from you; and he who glories therein puts himself in danger of entirely losing it. Besides, we often imagine we have perfections which we have not, consequently we are deceived if we value ourselves for them; and when we find in ourselves any thing valuable, we ought to give the glory to God, who is the author of it, and not to ourselves, who have received it, and say from your heart: *Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give the glory* †.

1. *In one's self.*

It is an excellent maxim of St. Bernard, which ought to be deeply engraven on your mind, that in all the favours God has bestowed upon us, he has reserved nothing to himself but the glory of being the author of them; and leaving to us the whole fruit of them, it is very unjust and criminal that we should take to ourselves the profit, and also the glory of them, retaining our part, and usurping that which belongs to God, after he has declared that he would give it to no one; "*I will not give* (says he) *my glory to another* ‡. "What therefore wilt thou give us, O Lord? I give you my peace, "I leave my peace to you, (saith he). It sufficeth, Lord; with "thanks I receive it, and quit what thou reservest to thyself. I "know myself an immense gainer by it. I disclaim all pretensions "to glory, as belonging to thee alone, lest I lose what thou art "pleased to bestow upon me. I desire thy peace, and nothing "more §; *for he is our peace, who hath made both one* ||." Weigh this well, *Theotime*.

2. Be humble towards God in consideration of his incomprehensible greatness, before whom you are nothing in comparison of that power, of that sovereign majesty, before which the angels themselves tremble. Acknowledge the offences you have committed against this infinite greatness, the favours which without number you have received from his bounty, the abuses you offered it, the account you must give at his judgment-seat, the necessity you have of his grace for your salvation, with a thousand like things, and you will find reason enough to humble, or rather annihilate yourself before God.

2. *Towards God.*

3. Be humble towards men. Some are humble towards God (for how should not a wretched

3. *Towards men.*

creature

* Eccli. vi. † Psal. cxiii. 9. ‡ Isaiah xlii. 8. § St. Bernard, Serm. 13. in Cant. † Ed. hec. ii. 14.

creature abase itself before its Creator, its Lord, its Judge ?) but they are proud in respect of men, and so have not true humility. To practise this humility towards men, you ought to know there are three degrees : some are above you, others your equals, and others inferiors ; to all whom you must behave with humility, but in a different manner.

Respect towards superiors. As to the first, be respectful, tractable, and obedient to all those who have any authority over you. Suffer yourself humbly to be reprehended ; if you do otherwise, you are proud.

Honour also all those who surpass you in any thing, in age, in science, in rank.

Towards equals. As for your equals, endeavour to treat them always with esteem, with honour, with deference, without being self-conceited, without being fond of respect, or desiring precedency ; you must leave these vanities to those who affect them.

Towards inferiors. As for your inferiors, be mild and affable to all those who serve you, considering them as your brethren. *And you masters, do the same things* (that is good) *to them* (to your servants) *forbearing threatnings : knowing that the Lord both of them and you is in heaven : and there is no respect of persons with him* *. Shew yourself humble and gracious to all of a meaner condition than you, according to that excellent precept of the wise man, *Make thyself affable to the congregation of the poor* † : Be ready to serve and assist them in their necessities.

In fine, a great means to repress pride, is to consider what man is, his baseness, his miseries, the shortness of life, and what follows after death. *Why is earth and ashes proud ? all power is of short life, a king is to-day and to-morrow he shall die ; for when a man shall die, he shall inherit serpents, and beasts and worms* ‡. What a motive is this to pride !

Regard not, *Theotime*, exterior objects, which surround you, and raise your pride and vanity, but consider what you are in yourself, and you will find reason enough to be humble ; it is the advice St. Bernard § gives you in those excellent verses which I shall present to you, to meditate attentively upon.

*Youth, beauty, wealth, and this vain world's applause,
Make man forget his nature, and her laws.*

His life's a toil, conception sin, a pain

His birth, and needs must die. Why then so vain ?

His corps will worms possess ; and stench and dread

Will worms succeed. Man is not man when dead.

The meaning is, that if man will consider himself attentively, he will find reason enough to repress his pride ; he will find that his conception involves him in sin, his birth in misery, that his

* Ephes. vi. 9. † Eccli. iv. 7. ‡ Eccli. x. 9. &c. § L. 9. Medit. c. 3.

life is a continued chain of labours, that death is an unavoidable necessity, and that after death he will possess nothing but stench, corruption and horror, as to his body. But as for his soul, she is to be presented before the judgment of God, to receive there the decree of her eternal happiness or misery ; a judgment which shall be terrible to the greatest saints. This is abundantly sufficient to curb the pride of man, and preserve in him profound humility, if he reflects on it : do you so from time to time, and learn from your infancy not to be proud, but humble and modest in your thoughts and actions.

THE END OF THE FOURTH PART.

T H E
INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH
IN
CHRISTIAN PIETY.

P A R T V.

Of the choice of a state of life.

THIS instruction would be imperfect, and destitute of one of the best and most necessary parts, if, after having shewed how we must live during youth, it should not direct how to make a good choice of the condition or state wherein the remainder of this life is to be spent. This choice is a subject, the knowledge of which is so much more necessary to young persons, as its importance is unknown to the greatest part of men, and the faults that are there committed are most commonly irreparable ; or if sometimes they be repaired, it is with very great pains and difficulty. Besides, such faults are not light, or of small consequence, as shall be made to appear.

C H A P. I.

How important it is to make a good choice of a state of life.

A fundamental truth in this matter. **T**HIS importance is built upon a truth, which is to be considered as fundamental in this matter. That though all states, which are not inconsistent with the gospel, may be blameless in themselves, all states are not suitable to every one.

God, who has established by his providence the diversity of states and employments for man, distributes them differently by his wisdom, designed some for one employment, and some for another ; as a father of a family divides amongst his servants the offices of his house, as he judges proper. Hence God endows men with different inclinations, and various natural abilities, as well corporal as spiritual ; he also distributes amongst them his graces diversly, according to the several necessities of their respective states, to which he calls them.

This

This truth being presupposed, evidently manifests how important it is that persons make a Christian choice of their state. For if God call each man to one state more particularly than another, it follows that we must proceed therein with great circumspection, to choose what is most conformable to his will, and for which he has given us most capacity, and prepared most grace.

This choice is of such consequence, that on it depends all the good of man, both for this life and the next. Consider, *Theotime*, the mischiefs to which an ill choice of a condition of life exposes men, and into which it will plunge you, if you be wanting to so important a duty.

How important the choice of a state is.

1. For the present life, what good, what contentment can he expect, who has entered upon a state which he has ill chosen, and for which he is no way qualified? There is no condition more miserable. The displeasure of seeing himself engaged against his inclination, joined with the difficulties he undergoes in satisfying his present obligations, casts him into a perpetual disquiet and melancholy, which render him as insupportable to others as he is to himself, and make him find in his condition a more horrid prison than that of criminals, and chains more unmerciful than those of galeys-slaves.

1. *For the present life.*

2. As for salvation, what can a man do in that state? For while melancholy casts him into a continual idleness, and that idleness into vice and perdition; with what trouble must he effect his salvation, in a state wherein he has neither ability, nor a vocation from God? The want of these two things will occasion an infinite number of sins, which would not have happened in another state. The defect of capacity makes him find continual difficulties in satisfying his duty, and the particular obligations of his state. The defect of vocation is the cause why he wants many graces he would have received in another calling, but of which he has rendered himself unworthy, by rashly entering upon this condition, without consulting God, or seeking his will. Moreover, if we search into the cause of the disorders reigning in every state, whether ecclesiastical, religious, or secular, we shall find the greatest part of these mischiefs to spring from their rash and worldly choice of a state of life.

2. *For salvation.*

C H A P. II.

Of the faults that are usually committed by youth in this choice.

FIRST, instead of choosing a state according to the rules of reason, and after a long and serious deliberation, young persons engage

1. *They deliberate not.*

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themselves in a calling sometimes from violence of passion and fancy, sometimes from a mere incidental occurrence, and frequently from the sole inclination they feel towards one condition rather than another, without examining whether they be qualified for it, and whether it be for their present and future well-being.

Secondly, they regard other ends than such as they ought to have before their eyes in this deliberation. Some let their choice be determined by the agreeableness of that life they mean to embrace; others by riches and preferment; others by honour and reputation; all are biassed by human considerations and worldly advantage: but few have regard to a future state or look beyond this world in what they do. A youth often says, this is proper to promote me in the world, and advance my fortune; nor does he say, it is not suitable to me, because I foresee I shall offend God in many occurrences; I see therein obligations I cannot satisfy, many occasions and dangers of hazarding my soul.

This fault is great, and against all reason; for, to deliberate wisely of the state wherein we are to spend our life, we must regard the end for which life is given us: which is the service of God, and the salvation of our souls. We must then refer the calling we choose to that end; to do otherwise is to lose our way at first setting out, and to suffer shipwreck in the port.

Thirdly, they only consult with themselves, without asking counsel of others. This fault is as common amongst young people, as it is ruinous and fatal: for how can they be competent to decide upon the most important concern of life, in an age wherein they have neither judgment nor experience, without taking counsel of wise and discreet persons? This cannot but be the effect of an insupportable rashness, or of an unhappy ignorance, which deserves so much more compassion, as it is the cause of much evil. If the wise man recommends so much to young people; *Lean not upon thy own prudence* *. *My son, do thou nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done* †. Is it not in this so important an affair, more than in any other, where they ought to follow this advice of the Holy Ghost. It is true every one ought to deliberate with himself in an affair of so great concern; he should examine his own inclinations and repugnances, his own good and bad qualities. But the choice of a state of life being often an obscure, doubtful and difficult business, there is no question but youth must principally consult in this affair, him who has knowledge of their conscience; there being none who can see more clearly, what should on that occasion be resolved upon than he. Moreover, God having deputed parents over their children, it is a regular way for children to consult their parents, for discovering the will of God in this intricate manner. To the counsel of the director and the advice of parents

* Prov. iii. 5. † Eccl. xxi. 24.

parents, may be added the opinion of some other persons, provided that these principally regard the salvation of him, whom they counsel, that they consider things maturely, and that they have no interest in his embracing one calling more than another.

Lastly, they consult not him who ought to be consulted above all others, viz. God himself: they have no recourse to him by prayer, humbly to implore his holy inspirations, and grace to know his will, although it be by him alone that they can succeed well in this choice. He is the father of lights, he is the author of good counsels. Besides, it belongs to him to give us our calling, and the employment wherein he would have us serve him. He expects we should have recourse to him, and advise with him in important affairs; we offer an offence to God, when we are defective therein, and he frequently permits such enterprizes to miscarry, to the confusion of those who will not seek his will. See a convincing example.

4. *They consult not God.*

The *Israelites*, desirous to fly the persecution of their enemies, took a resolution to return into *Egypt*, of their own heads, without consulting God to know what they should do. He reproached them exceedingly by his prophet, and threatened them that their design should not succeed, but have a dreadful issue, as in effect it had. *Wo to you apostate children, saith the Lord, that would take counsel, and not of me: and would begin a web, and not by my spirit, that you might add sin upon sin; who walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth, hoping for help in the strength of Pharaoh, and trusting in the shadow of Egypt. And the strength of Pharaoh shall be to your confusion, and the confidence of the shadow of Egypt to your shame* *. I wish that all those who deliberate of the choice of their state, had frequently these words in their memory. Every method of consulting God in this choice of a state of life, is not however effectual; if persons desire to secure a proper answer from heaven in this their consultation, they should lead a good life during the time of youth. The sins of youth are the ordinary cause of the bad election many make of their condition. *Saul*, the first king of *Israel*, is a terrible example of this truth: this prince had excited the anger of God against him by his disobedience and ingratitude. One day finding himself reduced to a great extremity, and not knowing what to resolve on, he consulted God. *But the Lord answered him neither by dreams, nor by priests, nor by prophets* †. Prompted by despair he then consulted a witch, and that wicked method is so far permitted to succeed, that from the Ghost of *Samuel*, who appeared to him, he learns his destiny; that the Lord had departed from him in punishment of his disobedience, and that on the morrow he should die together with his sons. What a frightful example is this! How clearly does it manifest, that God abandons men in the most urgent necessities in punishment of former sins. If then, *The time*, you be

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* *Isai.* xxx. 1, 2, 3. † *1 Kings* xxviii. 6.

not already at the age of choosing your state, take care to draw down by a virtuous life, the blessing of God, when you consult him. But if your life has been disorderly, do penance, and be converted to God with your whole heart, that your sins may not cause God to desert you in this choice.

C H A P. III.

Advice to parents concerning the vocation of their children.

ALITTLE experience in the world demonstrates how often parents are to blame in this important affair. Some leave their children to act as they please on this occasion; but the number is much more considerable of those who esteeming it, as it certainly is, an affair of the utmost importance, interpose parental influence far otherwise than they ought. These lay it down as a principle, that parents have a right, from their authority and experience, to assign for their children a state of life.

Upon this ground they usurp the power of predetermining their children to some way of life they themselves fancy before the proper time comes, and presently discover the intentions, and endeavour to engage them in it.

This method would not be entirely wrong, if they observed some regularity in it, and desisted from their opportunities when they meet with obstacles that ought to have their weight; such as their childrens repugnance, or incapacity for such states. All good parents act thus who truly love their children, and have no other view than their real good and salvation.

But the truth is, too many are guilty of this invasion upon their childrens liberty, and are bent upon the execution of their designs, notwithstanding the dislike or incapacity of their children, setting all engines at work to compass them. At first mildness and persuasion are employed, displaying the advantages of the condition they have fixed upon: but when these fail, they have recourse to threats and ill-usage to enforce a compliance.

Hence, how many while yet helpless babes are doomed to some particular profession, before their opening reason can understand, much less prudently determine upon that choice. Hence, a concern where the most wary circumspection should apprehend a false step, becomes the subject of childish entertainment. The tongues of children have been taught to lip the irrevocable name of their future engagement, and their tender minds accustomed to receive the same repeated suggestions, their own determination passed in riper years is nothing more than the effect of a forced impression grown up with themselves.

Such

Such methods, so opposite to reason and religion, are owing to parents having views not consistent with their childrens personal good. Oftentimes family interest influences them: sometimes a particular inclination to favour one to the prejudice of another: or, lastly, self-love makes them consult their own advantage, and neglect that of their children.

Such methods are opposite to reason and religion. This parents would be convinced of, if they consulted the one and the other with sincerity and disinterestedness.

Reason teaches them, that man being naturally free, and master of his own actions, no power on earth can oblige him to what is contrary to his good, especially where an engagement for life is in question; unless by his crimes he is obnoxious to such an engagement, or by the chance of war he is fallen into slavery; neither of which can be the case we treat of.

Reason will likewise inform them, that as parents they are obliged by the law of nature to promote their childrens welfare to the utmost of their abilities; to which nothing can be more opposite than to engage them in states improper for them. Their own experience will extort from these domineering parents this avowal, that they would be very sorry to be used by others, as they use their own children; and that the first kind of injustice is doing by others what we are unwilling to undergo ourselves. In fine, reason will show them that they behave worse to their children than to their servants, since they must own they would not willingly employ a servant, who remained in their service only by compulsion, or was not otherwise duly qualified; and consequently they must confess their own injustice in regard of their children, whom they engage in states not suitable to their inclinations, or natural capacities.

If after consulting reason they will hearken to the voice of religion, they will find that parents are not only answerable for the temporal advantages of their children, but much more for their spiritual good; and that as both the one and the other is closely connected with the state of life they undertake, parents are responsible to God for their childrens salvation, if they engage them in a state incompatible with it.

It will show them, that God will demand of them an account of the sins of their children, engaged in a state against their will, and without the necessary qualifications for the discharge of their duties: and that if God punishes so rigorously the neglect of parents in correcting their children (as in the case of *Heli* the high priest *) they must expect the worst of punishments if they actually contribute to their childrens sins, by engaging them in improper states, from whence those sins arise.

It will likewise convince them, that if according to the Apostle †, they are forbid to use too much harshness in governing their children

* 1 Kings, chap. iv. † Coloss. iii. 21.

dren, for fear of disheartening them in the way of virtue, much less ought they to engage their children in states disagreeable to them, and which will occasion numberless crimes. Blind parents ! with all your foresight in worldly affairs, can you be so much in the dark where your souls are concerned ? Shall ambition, interest, or passion prevail upon you to treat those so cruelly, whom the law of God and nature commands you to love ? To aggrandize some in the world, where perhaps they will fall into the depth of iniquity, will ye hazard the salvation of others, and render your own desperate ?

The same religion, if they vouchsafe to consult it, will inform them, that there are obligations essential to each of the three general states, ecclesiastical, religious, and worldly, on account of which they ought neither directly nor indirectly to lay any constraint on their children.

As to the ecclesiastical state, religion will teach them, that no one ought to engage therein unless called by God, and that parents who induce their children to it without a vocation, resist the appointments of God, and hazard the eternal welfare of their children. Besides, in this state we are obliged to perpetual chastity, a daily recital of the canonical hours, and a more than ordinary sanctified life. Such an engagement must be entirely voluntary, not imposed by others, not even parents, who have no such authority ; and if they do, they must expect to share in the guilt of all the transgressions against such duties.

The same, or rather more, may be said in regard of a religious state, wherein, by three solemn vows, they are obliged to perform three great things, perpetual chastity, poverty, and obedience. The sight of which ought to make parents tremble when their children engage of their own accord, much more if they have promoted it, or by promises and threats unjustly contrived it. Can any thing equal such cruelty, as to engage children in such arduous obligations against their will for their whole lives, and render their salvation almost impracticable ?

As for a married state, parents have no authority to force their children to it, much less to marry a person they do not like. It is a contract which necessarily requires an entire liberty and mutual affection : and as it is for life, if instead of mutual love, any aversion or opposite sentiments go with it, it proves a melancholy engagement attended with infinite miseries, scarce to be imagined but by those who have experienced them, and which must draw down the wrath of God on such parents who gave occasion to them.

Notwithstanding that parents are here condemned for taking too much upon themselves in determining the vocation of their children, parents are certainly allowed to direct the proceedings of their children, in that critical juncture. They are not only allowed, but as far as able they are obliged to assist them on that occasion with their advice : to induce them, if necessary, by exhortation, or to correct them by remonstrances and reprimands ; parents must en-
treat

treat the divine goodness to preserve their tender offspring from those dreadful precipices to which unthinking youth is exposed. The active part of parents in their childrens choice of a state of life, should be proportionable to their responsibility. Their zealous endeavours should be the warmest exertions which divine charity in union with parental affection invigorates, keeping heaven even in view, and suffering no human motive to intervene which cannot be made subservient to everlasting felicity.

I entreat parents, who read this advice, to do it with that reflection which is required in a matter of such importance, as it does not less affect their own salvation, than that of their children.

C H A P. IV.

Of the different states of life, and first of the ecclesiastical state.

THAT you may better deliberate on the calling you ought to choose, it is seasonable that I should speak of the principal states, and propose the most important things you must consider in each of them.

I begin with the ecclesiastical state, concerning which you ought to reflect attentively upon three things.

1. How great its obligations and dangers are.
2. The vocation you must have to it.
3. The preparation you must bring with you.

A R T I C L E I.

Of the obligations and dangers of an ecclesiastical state.

OF all states of life, that of an ecclesiastic is the highest, and most elevated. It is the calling which approaches nearest to God, and which God has established to interpose betwixt him and men, and by the mediation whereof he communicates himself to them. His Son *Jesus Christ* has committed to its trust all that is most perfect and dear to him; the ministry of his word, the dispensation of his divine mysteries, the administration of his sacraments, the government of the church, in fine, the salvation of souls, which he has redeemed by the price of his blood; a state whereof the functions surpass all those of angels, who look upon them with a profound respect, esteeming them infinitely above their power, and the dignity of their celestial nature.

This so exalted a state ought not to swell Ecclesiastics with vanity, but to fill them with much fear and trembling; for as it is high, it brings with it vast obligations.

The obligations of an ecclesiastical state.

I. It

1. It obliges them to a great sanctity; because they approach to God in their ministry, they are obliged to be holy. *I will be sanctified*, says he, *in them that approach to me* *. *Be holy, because I am holy* †. For this reason St. Thomas says ‡, “That the sanctity required for this state, ought to be greater than that of a religious state.”

They are not only obliged to a particular and hidden sanctity, such as that of other Christians, but to an exemplary sanctity, which serves as a light to others. They are designed to enlighten others by their lives, as well as words. The Son of God said particularly to them, *You are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven* §. And the council of Trent says excellently ¶, “There is nothing more effectually moves others to piety and to the worship of God, than the life and example of those, who have undertaken the sacred ministry. . . . Wherefore it becomes all the clergy, who are called into the lot of our Lord, so to frame their life and morals, that in their habit, behaviour, manner of walking, discourse, and all other things they shew nothing, but what is grave, moderate and religious: and as for lesser failings, which in them would be very great, they are to be careful to be exempt from them”

The other obligation of Ecclesiastics, is to co-operate in the salvation of souls; they are established for that end, and without a crime they cannot dispense with it; it is an abuse to believe, that only curates are charged with that obligation. All incumbents and ecclesiastics are obliged to this labour. St. Paul says, They are *your servants*, that is, the servants of the faithful §. The oblations are given to them by the faithful for that intent. And St. Gregory says **, “They ought to consider how criminal and punishable a thing it is, to receive the fruit of labour without labour. St. Jerome says, that priests shall not only render an account of their own sins, but of the sins of all those whose goods they abuse, living on their goods, and not taking any care of their salvation ††.”

“St. Bernard adds a dreadful thing, that at the universal judgment we shall hear the complaints and lamentations of people, who shall rigorously accuse the ecclesiastics before the tribunal of God, as deceivers, for having lived on their goods, without applying themselves to the expiation of their sins; for having been blind guides, and unfaithful mediators of their salvation; for having cast them into a precipice, instead of conducting them to eternal life ‡‡.”

O, *Theotime*, read attentively, and weigh well the sentiments of these great saints, touching this obligation of Ecclesiastics, to engrave them deeply in your heart, and advantage yourself by them, when you shall be entered into an Ecclesiastical state.

From

* Lev. x. 3. † Lev. xi. 44. ‡ 2. 2. 7. 138. a, 8. § Mat. v. 14. 16. ¶ Sess. 21. c. 1. § 2 Cor. iv. 5. ** Hom. 1 in Evang. †† In c. 44. Ezech. ‡ In Declamat.

From these two so strict obligations, spring two extreme dangers in this state. The one is, of not being endowed with the sanctity it requires, *The dangers of an Ecclesiastical state.* but corrupted by the spirit and maxims of the world, and much more by the contagion of those Ecclesiastics, who lead a life far removed from the perfection of their state. The other danger is, of falling into that idleness common to rich Ecclesiastics; which making them neglect the labour to which their duty obliges them, renders them very guilty in the sight of God, and moreover leads them into many disorders and vices, whereof it is ordinarily the mother.

To these two dangers must be added a third, which consists in the management of their revenues, which cannot without a mortal sin be employed in wicked, or even in superfluous expences, as in delicacies, in good cheer, in vanities, in excesses of feasts, dress, moveables, and other things; nor in enriching their relations, or heaping up treasures, which often draw the visible curse of God upon those who hoard them up. Incumbents are forbidden all these things. And it is an undoubted truth, that they cannot receive from their benefices more than their sufficient and modest maintenance, the rest ought to be employed in alms and pious works. Many divines hold they are bound to restitution, when they dispose of it otherwise; and the generality condemn them at least as guilty of a mortal sin.

ARTICLE II.

Of the vocation to an Ecclesiastical state.

THE Ecclesiastical state being so holy and eminent, must certainly require a vocation from God. This is the great maxim of the Apostle. *Neither doth any man take the honour to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was.** *There must be a vocation to an Ecclesiastical state.* A maxim which he confirms by the adorable example of Jesus Christ, who being by himself, and by his dignity of the Son of God, a priest, would not take upon him the quality of sovereign high-priest, but received it from him, who from all eternity said to him, *Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee*; and in the moment of his incarnation said to him, *Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech.*

This example of Jesus Christ, ought to confound all those who have the boldness to intrude themselves by their own motion, without a divine call, drawing upon themselves by this impudence, the wrath of God, a denial of his graces, and the certain loss of their eternal salvation.

This being so, *Theotime*, you may very well judge with what care you ought to examine your vocation, if you deliberate on an Ecclesiastical

* Heb. v. 4.

Ecclesiastical state. To succeed happily therein, see what you are to do : you must know whether the motion and inclination you feel to an Ecclesiastical state come from God ; for if it come from him, it is a vocation, but if it comes not from him, it is an illusion and deceit of the Devil, whereby he means to ruin you.

To know whether this motion comes from God, you must examine two things. 1. What intention inclines you to this state. 2. Whether you have the requisite dispositions.

As to the intention, if it be bad, it is certain your motion comes not from God. Now it is bad, if you have for the mark at which you aim, any of these ends ; to live more at your ease in an Ecclesiastical state ; to find therein repose, idleness, or pleasures ; to heap up riches ; to be honoured and esteemed by men. All these motives are bad, and if you have any such, your vocation is not from God, but rather from the Devil. This truth is learned from St. *Bernard* in those remarkable words worthy of the greatest attention : “ All those, “ says he, who in ecclesiastical orders seek either honour or riches, “ or the pleasures of this life ; and, in a word, who seek their inter- “ rest, and not that of *Jesus Christ*, without doubt are not moved to “ this state by charity, which is from God, but by covetousness, “ which is the enemy of God, and the source of all evil *.”

Your intention then must be good, and to be so, it must have for its end, the sanctification of your own soul, and the salvation of your neighbour's, which are the two general obligations of that calling. That is, you should propose to yourself to live in that state a holy and exemplary life, and contribute to the salvation of souls by your prayers, labour, and all possible means, according to the same St. *Bernard*, who says, “ that “ he who would enter into the orders of the church, and be received into the ministry of the sanctuary, ought to have this intention, to approach to God with an absolute disengagement from “ the things of this world, in a perfect purity of mind and body “ to be illuminated by him, and procure therein his own salvation “ and that of his neighbour, by applying himself to prayer, and to “ the dispensation of the word of God.”

But it is not sufficient to have a good intention ; you must also be fit for it. There are two sorts of defects which make a man improper for that calling, the defects of the mind, and the corruption of life and manners. We shall not speak of those of the body, whereof some render a man irregular, that is, incapable, according to the canons of the church, of being admitted to orders. The defects of the mind are dullness or stupidity, rudeness, levity, ignorance and other like, which visibly render a man incapable of discharging ecclesiastical duties. Such defects, when they cannot be corrected by age and application, are contrary to an ecclesiastical calling and apparently discover that a man is not called to it.

The same is to be said of the corruption of manners. Every one who has lived in sin, or is still subject to any vice, as impurity, drunkenness, swearing, revenge, covetousness, ambition, and other like faults, ought not to believe himself fit, or called by God to an ecclesiastical life, except he has corrected his former manners by a long penance, and has entirely mortified his passions, and conquered his bad inclinations by contrary virtues.

A R T I C L E III.

Of the preparation necessary for an ecclesiastical state.

PREPARATION is the third thing you have to consider in deliberating on an ecclesiastical state, and so much more necessary, as it sometimes happens that they who aspire to this state do not think themselves obliged to be prepared for it a long time before by a virtuous and holy life. This is an error so much the more to be deplored, as it is the principal cause why ecclesiastics dishonour this state by their lives after, by engaging themselves therein without this preparation, it is no wonder if they lead, as they did before, a worldly, and oftentimes a most vicious life.

There must be a preparation to an ecclesiastical state, by a virtuous and holy life.

To disabuse you, *Theotime*, of this error, it is sufficient to represent to you the sanctity of that state: for if it be so holy and sublime, it is an infallible consequence, that you must prepare yourself for it by a holy life; and to enter into orders with a soul still subject to sin, and full of vicious habits, is to condemn it, and to offer a most heinous injury to it: it is to put yourself into the greatest danger of dishonouring it by a life unworthy of it, and contrary to the sanctity it requires, and to meet with inevitable perdition.

Proofs of this truth.

By the sanctity of the state.

To convince you of the necessity of this preparation, I shall give you here the sentiments of the fathers, and of the church herself upon this subject.

By convincing authority.

St. Gregory the Great says *, “That we must ascend unto orders by order; for he seeks to fall down, who, desiring to mount up to a high place, leaves the ordinary degrees to ascend by rough and craggy ways.” And he adds an excellent comparison: “For as timber is not proper to be employed in building when it is yet green, and newly come out of the forest, except it be dried and seasoned a long time; otherwise it rather serves to ruin the building than support it.” Thus they ought not to be advanced to sacred orders, who have lately been engaged in sin, except all their

* Lib. 7. Epist. 182.

their wicked habits have been corrected by a long and serious penance.

St. *Jerome* *, speaking of an ecclesiastical state, says, "Wo be to him who enters therein without the nuptial robe of sanctity." He further adds, "Let every one examine and prove himself, and not approach before that trial. Ecclesiastical dignity doth not make a Christian nor a virtuous man," such an one as an ecclesiastical ought to be.

St. *Bernard*, in many places of his works, is full of complaints and invectives against those who enter thus into orders, without bringing with them the preparation of a holy life experienced in virtue. He says, it is an insupportable impudence in those who do it, and that it is the source of all the disorders of ecclesiastics †.

St. *Thomas* established this difference between sacred orders and a religious state, that to enter into religion is not necessary to be exercised before-hand in virtue; but to enter into orders it is required: and he brings this reason, "Because sacred orders require a previous sanctity, which the state of religion does not, which is an exercise instituted to attain unto sanctity ‡."

All these authorities are clear, and admits of no reply. Give ear to that of the whole church speaking in the council of *Trent*.

The sacred council, after it had determined the age wherein one might receive holy orders, adds §, "That all those are not capable of orders who have attained to that age, but only those who are worthy of it, and whose approved life is a certain old age;" that is, they should make amends for their age by the wisdom of their life, and sanctity of their manners, according to that maxim of the wise man, which says, that *the understanding of a man is grey hairs: and a spotless life is old age ¶*.

After all these authorities there is no reason to doubt of the necessity of this preparation to an ecclesiastical state, but rather to be both astonished and sorry to see it not so well observed. Be not guilty, *Theotime*, of this fault; but if you aim at an ecclesiastical state, use all endeavours to prepare, and render yourself worthy of it.

At the same time that you prepare yourself for an ecclesiastical state by a virtuous life, remember to join with the exercises of piety, diligent application to study, in order to qualify yourself for serving God in that calling. This labour is no less necessary for an ecclesiastical state than that of sanctity. You are obliged to it in conscience, and if you apply not yourself carefully to it, you render yourself unworthy of that calling: *Because thou hast rejected knowledge, saith the Almighty, I will reject thee that thou shalt not do the office of priesthood to me ||*. And moreover

* Epist. 1. † Lib. de Conversione ad clericos. c. 19. ‡ 2. 2. qu. 180. ar. 1.
§ Sess. 25. c. 12. ¶ Wisd. iv. 8, 9. || Osee iv. 6.

moreover, you render yourself guilty in the sight of God, of all the mischiefs which happen through your ignorance.

The ignorance of priests is the greatest evil that can be found in the church, it being the chief cause of the corruption of the people, and loss of souls. It is impossible but that an ignorant ecclesiastic should be slothful and idle, not being able to apply himself to his studies, and that idleness should lead him into vice, as we sometimes see. Now

The great evils which spring from the ignorance of priests.

although he should not be vicious, idleness alone is criminal in a priest. Add the mischiefs which the ignorance of ecclesiastics causes with respect to the people: it either hinders them from labouring for the salvation of souls, or doing it effectually (from whence the people suffer much, losing the assistance they ought to receive from them for their eternal salvation) or occasions the loss of many souls by their not being instructed in what appertains to salvation, and the way that leads to it. It is not to be conceived how many souls are lost by the ignorance of priests. "The church (says St. Bernard*) hath daily a great and lamentable experience of the danger souls are exposed unto, when the pastor wants wherewith to feed his sheep, when the guide knows not the way by which he should conduct them to salvation, nor the servant the will of his master, which he ought to declare to others."

Dear *Theotime*, reflect well upon these truths, and be afraid, lest by your ignorance you make yourself the cause of the ruin of souls redeemed by the blood of *Jesus Christ*. Apply yourself seriously to the study necessary for an ecclesiastic, and endeavour to qualify yourself the best you can for that state to which God has called you.

In fine, whether in deliberating on this state, or preparing yourself for it, set frequently before your eyes those excellent words of St. Augustine, writing to a friend of his, who asked his advice concerning an ecclesiastical state.

An important advice.

"I intreat you, (says he) before all things, that in your virtuous wisdom you will consider well that there is nothing in this life, and principally at this time, more easy, more light, and more acceptable to men, than the duty of a bishop, of a priest, or of a deacon, if it be negligently discharged; yet there is nothing more miserable, more dreadful, and more damnable in the sight of God. Besides, there is nothing in this life, and at this time more difficult, more painful, and more dangerous, than the office of a bishop, priest, or deacon, if they acquit themselves of it as they ought, and according to the will of our master; as also there is nothing more happy in the sight of God †."

* In Declam. † Ep. 184.

C H A P. V.

Of a religious state.

AFTER the ecclesiastical state I come to the religious, the choice whereof is of no less consequence than that of the former, nor subject to less faults.

To make a good choice of this state two things are necessary;
1. To know the nature of it. 2. To know whether one be called to it.

A R T I C L E I.

What a religious state is; its obligations, advantages and dangers.

A religious state. A RELIGIOUS life, according to St. Thomas, is, "An institution established for the
"acquiring of interior sanctity." For this end

Its obligations. persons leave the world, and oblige themselves to observe an exact chastity, renouncing all carnal pleasures, not only in affection, but in effect; a perfect poverty, removed from the possession of, as well as the affection to earthly goods; and an entire abnegation of their own will, to follow the will of their superiors; that thus disengaged they may with more freedom apply themselves to spiritual exercises. They moreover oblige themselves to comply minutely with their rule, and to sanctify their souls by the practice of Christian virtues.

Its advantages. As the obligations of this state are strict, so the advantages annexed to it are singular; St. Bernard * describes them as follows: "In religion a man lives more purely, is raised more readily, walks more cautiously, is more frequently refreshed with divine grace, reposes with more security, dies with less fear, is sooner purged in the other life, and more abundantly recompensed in heaven." But this is to be understood, as he himself says, of a religious state that is observed in a holy manner.

Its dangers. This state has likewise many dangers; the same St. Bernard reduces them to three.
The first danger is of falling into pride, and a good opinion of one's self.

The second is, the danger of returning into the world, either in effect, or at least in desire.

The third is, of growing negligent in the exercise of a religious life. This being a way, as the same saint observes, wherein one must either advance, or fall back.

* Lib de modo bene vivendi. Serm. 65.

The first of these dangers generally originates from this, that men judge of sanctity by the exterior, not reflecting that it consists in those virtues which adorn the soul, and chiefly in the practice of humility. The other two dangers most frequently arise from conversing with the world, which is infinitely dangerous to religious persons, as St. Bernard says. And all three proceed from a want of a true vocation to religion.

ARTICLE II.

How to know whether one be called to a religious state.

FIRST, if you perceive in yourself a strong inclination to that state, be careful not to reject it, because perhaps it is a vocation from God; and not to embrace it suddenly, because it may be only a human sentiment. Take a good space of time to examine your inclination, and during that time, attend to what God shall say to your soul, according to that expression of the prophet, *I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me* *. But you should refrain from any conversation with those who would induce you to become a religious; otherwise you will not discern whether your inclination come from the inspiration of God, or the persuasion of men.

First means.

2dly, Beg daily of God with great earnestness, that he would be pleased to make his will known to you, saying, with St. Paul, *Lord, what wilt thou have me do* †?

Second means.

3dly, Examine diligently, 1. The obligations, advantages, and dangers of a religious life, of which we have already spoken. 2. The intention you should bring to this state. The intention must be to withdraw yourself from the world in order to do penance, and to be sanctified interiorly by the practice of virtue: if any other motive incline you to that calling, your design is not from God. Examine also whether you be fit for it in body and mind. Yet above all things, resolve not without consulting some prudent, and disinterested person, particularly your spiritual director. Many young people throw themselves into the noviceship too hastily; whence it often happens that being obliged to leave it, they are looked upon by the world as inconstant, condemned as people fit for nothing, or, what is too common, quitting a religious habit, they also forsake virtue; or else, ashamed to depart from the convent, they engage in a religious order unadvisedly, and without a vocation; and under the appearance of virtue they lead a worldly life, full of vices, until from great disorders they sometimes fall into apostacy.

Third means.

It is then a matter of the greatest consequence to follow the admonition of St. John, *Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether*

* Psalm lxxiv. 9.

† Act. ix. 6.

whether they be of God * ; especially as St. Paul teaches, that Satan himself, that spirit of darkness, *transformeth himself into an Angel of light* †.

Marks of a vocation.

The marks of a vocation are three ; humility, peace of mind, and perseverance. By *humility*, I understand that virtue which makes us wholly distrust our own judgment in an affair of such importance, to follow that of wiser persons. By *peace of mind*, I mean a disposition to follow the will of God on what side soever it may incline, when we shall sufficiently have learned it. By *perseverance*, I understand the long continuance of an inspiration, that is, at least for six months or a year, amidst the obstacles and difficulties which occur.

If your inclination to a religious state does not continue, it is a sign it was only a human motion, or a pious thought inspired by heaven inciting you to virtue in the state you fix upon. But if you resolve to embrace a religious life, remember to prefer amongst monastic institutes and religious houses, that wherein a regular conduct is most exactly observed, that wherein the professed members labour to gain solid piety, and, as much as you can, that wherein there is least communication with the world.

C H A P. VI.

Of the divers states of a secular life.

AS the life of ecclesiastics and that of religious has its dangers, a secular life has also its perils, which are not inconsiderable. He who deliberates on it, ought to foresee them. These dangers are different, according to the respective states.

Gentry. Dangers of this condition.

If there be a difficult and hazardous condition, it is the life of those whom the world calls great, that of persons publicly invested with such power and authority, as usually attends a plentiful fortune, possessed of any degree of dignity or elevation over private persons, to whom honour, respect, deference and attendance are paid, and are otherwise in full enjoyment of riches and the pleasures of this life ; this state, I say, is full of dangers and precipices, very difficult to be avoided by those, who are exposed thereto. Ordinary virtues are there so easily corrupted, and the most solid shaken, that few give hopes of their living in a state of salvation. Being too often addicted to those vices hinted at Part III. c. x. and xi. their ill conduct forms a poison that spreads itself and infects all those around them. Their friendship has been fatal to many, whom their passions have drawn into sin. They not only tolerate swearing, cursing, drinking, sinful discourse and immodesty in those who are

* 1 John iv. 1. † 2 Cor. xi. 14.

under their controul, but too often are themselves the examples of these vices. Their depraved judgment presumes to fix the standard of a Christian life which they vainly think can be reconciled with a worldly spirit. Here you will meet with a base flattering of those whom fortune smiles upon, false friendship and dissimulation, which shew a pleasing countenance to those whom they hate in their heart, and thus mistake common civility for the practice of the love of their neighbour. But what gives rise to the general depravity of this state is such a self-conceit, that they stand above correction, and think themselves only placed in this world to be respected, waited upon and idolized by inferiors.

Hence all who foresee themselves designed by *Duties of this state.*

Divine Providence for this high but slippery station, must stand in great fear, and arm themselves with great precaution against the dangers of that life : 1st, By being grounded in perfect humility, being convinced of their want of extraordinary grace to bear the weight of worldly honour, and not suffer their heart to cleave to it. 2dly, By being resolved to live in this elevated station in fear and trembling, having always before their eyes the great extent of their obligations and the divine judgments, which shall be more rigorous, the more they abuse his blessings. 3dly, By earnestly endeavouring to surpass private persons in solid virtue, rather than by any worldly excellence. 4thly, By daily imploring heaven, that their talents, liberal education, degree of superiority, authority, riches, honours, and such other blessings received, may not by an ill use become to them so many curses. 5thly, By not setting their affections upon pleasure, greatness, esteem, riches, so as to let them draw them from the concern of salvation, or lessen their faith and hope in God. 6thly, By never prostituting their power, authority, riches, or influence, to encourage or promote idleness, intemperance or any other vice, much less to oppress the poor or make the innocent groan under the injustice or tyranny of their capricious humour. Lastly, by frequent and fervent prayer, by approaching the sacraments, by taking advice in all matters of importance, by reading good books, and by copying in their life the examples of all those saints, who worked out their salvation in the same exalted rank.

But no condition is more dangerous, as no *Profession of arms.* condition is more corrupt, than the profession of arms.

Amongst the vices which reign in this profession, there are five very common, and very enormous. The first is, a general prophane-ness and irreligion, which make them condemn the service of God and their own salvation, and are too often the forerunners to impiety and atheism. The second, an execrable custom of swearing and blaspheming. The third, an unbridled impurity, which reigns in that calling more than any other. The fourth, an unaccountable passion for duelling, which sacrifices to the devil and eternal flames

a vast number of that profession. The fifth consists in rapine, unjust exactions, violences, and ill treating those who cannot resist.

It is a most difficult thing to be of that profession, and not to fall into those vices : the wisest and most virtuous learn them sooner or later, and are corrupted at last by the example or persuasion of others.

O *Theotime*, if some inevitable obligation drives you into that state, know, that you cannot sufficiently apprehend your danger ; and if you would prevent your eternal ruin, you have need of arming yourself powerfully against these enemies, and dangers which environ you.

1. Embrace not that calling but with reason, and for a good cause ; as because your birth obliges you thereto, or for the benefit of the public, or other good reason, and not through caprice and licentiousness, from idleness and sloth, from a desire of raising your fortune, much less of enriching yourself by spoils, robberies, and extortions. These are the most ordinary motives of those who settle in that condition, and the cause of its reigning evils.

2. Make a resolution to live like a virtuous man, fearing God, flying the particular vices of that profession, not concerning yourself about what others shall say of you ; they will cause you some trouble in the beginning, but at the end you will get above them.

3. Place not bravery and courage in appearing valiant, in suffering nothing from any person, in fighting upon all occasions, but in serving faithfully and courageously your prince and country in all occurrences. With regard to duels, see Part III. Chap. XI.

As for what remains towards the regulating of your life, be no swearer nor blasphemmer.

Hinder disorders, as duels, blasphemies, injustices, robberies, vexations, violence, sacrileges, and all other mischiefs which soldiers may commit : you are obliged to it when you can, especially if you be in command. You shall answer to God for all the disorders committed under you, if you have not used all your endeavours to prevent them. You are obliged to make restitution for all the damage which is done to others by your fault. Neither promote nor countenance any injustice, nor put in execution the commands of others, which you clearly see to be unjust.

Be assisting to the afflicted, protect the poor, and all those who suffer violence or injustice.

Be not insolent in victory, nor cruel towards the conquered, but mild and favourable as much as prudence will permit, following that maxim of St. *Augustine* *, who says, “ that as force is used towards the enemy who resists, so mercy ought to be shewn to him who is overcome, when he is no more in a condition to be hurt.”

Often examine your conscience, to keep it always in a state of innocence ; confess frequently, beg of God daily that he would give

* Ep. 205.

you grace to avoid the dangers of your state and condition, reflecting often on them to that end.

The lawyer must avoid ignorance in his profession, undertaking unjust or ill-grounded causes, advising unreasonable disputes, encouraging vexatious suits, answering according to the inclination of the parties, making every cause appear probable ; accusing falsely, or detracting his neighbour to defend himself ; revealing what is secret, when not belonging to the cause ; using such licence in invectives and injuries, as if it were lawful to violate charity for the preservation of one's right ; contriving ways for putting off the hearing, or otherwise prolonging the suit, either for his own advantage, or for tiring out his adversary with unreasonable charges ; putting his client, especially poor people, to extravagant expences ; neglecting the suits of poor clients ; fomenting divisions, or falsifying deeds. He must also beware of having his mind so much employed with the temporal concerns of his neighbour, as to neglect the most important affair of his own salvation.

The lawyer.

Judges or arbitrators should never permit their judgment to be corrupted by passion, favour, party, or interest, otherwise they do injury to right, and perhaps to estate, reputation, or life.

Judges.

The doctor and surgeon undertake a cure : if then they neglect their patient ; if they will not consider his case ; if they rashly engage in what they do not understand ; if they make delays in the cure, &c. they are unjust to their patient, they rob him of his money, and many times of his life. These also sin, if they flatter the dying patient with hopes of life, when they should rather admonish him to set in order his conscience : or if too easy in giving their patients certificates for being dispensed with as to fasting. I add the danger of sin to which they are exposed by being necessitated to treat objects which may excite impurity ; for which reason they should take great precaution against this vice.

The physician and surgeon.

Tradesmen ought to avoid covetousness, or the excessive desire of gain or riches, deceits, disguising or falsifying merchandizes, breaking their word, unjust and unreasonable gain, usury, and other disorders. The same in proportion is to be said of artificers and other professions, which have relation to, or are in combination with the former.

Tradesmen.

Many undertake to be trustees and guardians : if these have little or no regard to what they have undertaken, so that the parties concerned are wronged through their want of care and inspection, or for not taking accounts : if they are careful, but manage for their own advantage, and not for those who are in their trust : if they any way concur in or consent to any thing in wrong to their trust, however they may palliate it, as to satisfy or elude

Trustees and guardians.

the law, yet they have so much injustice to answer to God, and ought to enquire, how far they are bound to restitution.

Overseers of the poor. If those who have the care of the poor, or are concerned in other collections, turn any part of it above what may be allowed, to their own use? If they make unnecessary expences, and set it down to the stock? If they any other way wrong the public, they are so far guilty of injustice, and must compensate the damage.

Bailiffs or stewards. If those who are bailiffs or stewards, or have any other part in gathering in or paying out money, through their neglect make those losers who employ them: if they unreasonably oppress debtors, and the poor, for their own gain; if they are industrious in turning to their own advantage, what, in right, is the master's; if they make ill-contracts or hazardous for the master, but for their own profit; if they connive at or favour those who injure the master, they are so far responsible and bound to restitution.

Servants. Servants are not to accept of a place for a livelihood, where they have not opportunity of serving God, and taking due care of their souls; where they have daily bad example of prophaneness and of other scandalous vices; where they must serve their master, or others, in what is sinful; or where there is danger of being drawn into sin, either by those whom they serve, or by other companions. But if they are in service, they must be faithful in punctually doing what they have undertaken, and belongs to their place; in not wasting, misemploying or giving away, what belongs to their masters; nor in letting them be losers through their neglect; nor in making any advantage to themselves, of what belongs to them. These being some of the obligations of servants, none can pretend to a good conscience, if they do not make a conscience of them; and if they do not diligently enquire, what their duties are, and faithfully endeavour to perform them.

Thus in every profession there are vices and dangers, which must be known before persons enter upon them, that they may beware of them, because without this precaution they follow the broad road of those who, by being faithless to the duties of their profession, risk the loss of their souls.

C H A P. VII.

Of the state of marriage.

WHEN you are entered into one of the former employments of a civil life, you must settle in the world, which ordinarily is performed by marriage, and sometimes, though more rarely,

in an unmarried life. In the choice of these two states, persons frequently fall into many faults, which draw after them an infinite number of miseries, and eternal damnation. It is therefore infinitely interesting to know, 1st, the holiness, obligations, advantages and dangers of these two respective states: 2dly, what dispositions are required to satisfy the duties of these two states.

ARTICLE I.

What we ought to know of a married life.

THIS state is holy, being instituted and sanctified by God himself from the beginning of the world, and since raised to the dignity of a sacrament by his Son *Jesus Christ*, to sanctify the persons that would enter into it, and to confer on them graces necessary to acquit themselves worthily of it. Thus this state is holy in its institution, by its author who is God, by the dignity of the sacrament which is annexed to it, by the sanctifying grace which it augments in those who duly receive it, by the graces and assistances it affords them in their necessities, and by the excellent signification of the union of *Jesus Christ* with the church his spouse, which made *St. Paul* give it the name of a great sacrament*.

Holiness of the marriage state.

Secondly, the holiness of this state brings with it great obligations, which are, 1st, to undertake and proceed in it with purity of intention, and to observe all those conditions which the church prescribes. 2dly, To lead a holy and truly Christian life, in the fear of God, and in the observance of his commandments, as it is said in the Scripture of the father and mother of *St. John the Baptist* †. 3dly, To observe an inviolable fidelity to one another, and to refrain from all those things that are forbidden. 4thly, To educate their children in the fear of God, provide for their necessities, to be concerned for their temporal well-being, but much more for their eternal salvation.

Its obligations.

Thirdly, the advantages of this state in order to salvation are not in general so great as those of the Ecclesiastical or Religious life: at the same time it requires not so great a degree of perfection; and if it have any advantage over those two states, it is, that not binding to so much religious strictness, salvation may be more easily secured, provided no other obstacle occur. All temporal advantages are here out of the question, because we consider this state only with reference to salvation. Moreover, the enjoyments and contentments that are found therein, are not to be compared with its troubles and adversities, according to *St. Paul*, who says, that afflictions are inevitable to married persons ‡.

Its advantages.

Fourthly,

* Ephes. v. † Luke i. ‡ 1 Cor. viii. 28.

Its dangers. Fourthly, The dangers of this state are numerous, and so much greater, as they are not discovered, nor often perceived by those who are environed with them.

The first springs from the foolish and unreasonable love frequently found between married persons in prejudice to their love of God, which is the cause of a vast number of sins committed by them, fearing more to displease each other than offend God, and thus drawing upon themselves his displeasure and indignation.

The second danger arising from a cause quite contrary to the former, is an aversion they sometimes have for one another, proceeding from difference of humours, jealousies, or indiscretions, which make marriage become even a hell in this world, and the way to another that is eternal.

The third danger proceeds from an inordinate love of their children, which is also an inexhaustible source of sins to parents, when, through that foolish love, they apply all their care to improving the temporal advantages of their children, as health, beauty, good behaviour, to promoting them in the world, to heaping up riches for them, which will hazard their souls, to procuring great employments for them, and in the mean time neglect their education, their correction, their amendment, their good life, and their eternal salvation.

The fourth danger is an immoderate love of the world, by setting their affections too much on its deceitful employments, whereby they lose the taste and sense of real goods, which are those of grace and eternal salvation. This made St. Paul say, that *he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided* *. All these dangers are greater than can be expressed, and married persons have need of much grace to avoid them.

A R T I C L E II.

The necessary dispositions for a married state.

WE may say with truth, that the greatest part of the miseries which happen in a married life, springs from the bad dispositions of those who engage in it, and particularly the following.

The first is, the wickedness of their youth, until the time of their marriage: for if, as the wise man says †, God will give a happy marriage to those who have lived piously during their youth, it follows that he frequently punisheth the sins of youth by an unfortunate marriage, as we daily see.

The second fault is, the sinister intention of those who enter into the state of marriage; who propose to themselves no other end in that state than pleasure, and the contentments they expect to find therein

* 1 Cor. vii. 33. † Eccli. xxvi. 3.

therein, and which they conceive to be quite different from what in effect they are.

The third is, that which is committed in the choice of the person they have a mind to espouse: a choice which is ordinarily made without consulting God, without any knowledge of the disposition, manners, or humour of the person with whom they are to be engaged for their whole life, and without any other consideration than that of interest, or an indiscreet and ill-grounded love. This is the complaint of St. *Jerome*, who says, "it often happens that there is no choice made in marriages, and that the faults of the women are not known till after they are espoused."

The fourth cause springs from the bad disposition they bring to the sacrament of matrimony, which they often receive in the state of sin; and from the many irregularities committed in the celebration of the nuptials, as well by the married, as by those who are invited: for how can God give his benediction to a marriage whereto the parties bring a heart full of lewd thoughts, and unchaste desires; where there appear great extravagance and expence in dress and festival entertainments, which offend Christian modesty, and frequently exceed their state and ability, and where their divertisements are mixed with all manner of excesses, and with all that is dissolute and immodest? So that these nuptials are rather the triumph of impure love, and a feast of the devil, than a marriage of Christians, which ought to be consecrated to modesty, and sanctified by the presence of *Jesus Christ*.

These are the most ordinary causes of unhappy marriages, and of all the endless misfortunes which arise from thence. Wherefore, to succeed well in so great and important an enterprize, you must carefully avoid all these so dreadful causes.

For this end be convinced of three truths, which are certain and undoubted maxims in this matter.

The first is, that the greatest happiness that can befall him who embraces a married life, is to succeed well in the choice of the person he would espouse; on the contrary, there is no greater misfortune than to succeed ill on this occasion. The second is, that this good success can only come from God. And the third, that God does not ordinarily shew this favour, but to those who have lived well, or have done penance, and have not fallen into the faults we have pointed out.

These three truths are expressed by the Holy Ghost himself; he teaches the first, when he says by the mouth of the wise man, *He that hath found a good wife, hath found a good thing, and shall receive a pleasure from the Lord* *. *There is nothing so much worth as a well instructed soul: a holy and shame-faced woman is grace upon grace, that is, a blessing which surpasses all blessings* †. *He that hath hold of her, (a wicked woman) is as he that taketh hold of a scorpion* ‡: and it will be more agreeable to abide with a lion and a dragon, than to dwell with

* Prov. xviii. 22. † Eccli. xxvi. 18, 19. ‡ Eccli. xxvi. 10.

with a wicked woman *. The second truth is expressed by these excellent words, spoken of what is there called a diligent, a wise, and silent woman, or a good wife : *Her discipline is the gift of God †, to which there is nothing comparable. And in the Proverbs, house and riches are given by parents ; but a prudent wife is properly from the Lord ‡.* The third truth is a consequence of the second ; for if God gives this great blessing, it follows also, that a man must merit it from him, *A good wife is a good portion, she shall be given in the portion of them that fear God to a man for his good deeds † ;* God gives it to a man in recompense of his good actions.

The Angel *Raphael* says to the father of young *Sarah*, that his daughter was reserved for young *Tobias*, because he feared God, and that the others had been unworthy of her by reason of their sins. *To him who feareth God is thy daughter due to be his wife : therefore another could not have her §.*

The second thing you have to do when you are fully convinced of these truths, and resolved to avoid the four faults we mentioned, which are the most ordinary causes of bad marriages, is to endeavour to acquire the necessary dispositions for marriage.

First then, Live well during your youth. Be chaste, and let not the love of pleasures take possession of your heart. Follow not the torrent of the bad example of those of your age, who seek nothing but pleasures. Be afraid, lest God punish you in the same way by which you have sinned, and that for the pleasures you shall have taken during your youth, which are soon past, he permit you to fall into a long train of insuperable difficulties and sorrows, which will not only make your life a hell upon earth, but endanger your being unhappy in the life to come.

Secondly, When you shall be about entering into the bonds of wedlock, lay aside all motives suggested by corrupt nature, and aim chiefly at God's honour and the saving of your soul. Seek not carnal pleasure in so holy an institution, but the virtuous end which a Christian ought to propose to himself. The angel *Raphael* has declared it in a word to young *Tobias* ; *Thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather with the love of children than for lust ¶.* Call to mind the terrible example of the seven husbands of young *Sarah*, who were all stifled by the Devil on the day of their nuptials, and learn from thence the cause which the same Angel told to *Tobias* : *Hear me, says he to him, and I will shew thee who they are, over them whom the Devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the Devil hath power **.*

Imprint these words deeply in your mind, and know, that if the Devil does not destroy those immediately who prostitute the sanctity of

* Eccli. xxv. 23. † Eccli. xxvi. 16, 17, 18. ‡ Prov. xix. 14. § Eccli. xxvi. 3. ¶ Tob. vii. 12. ¶ Tob. vi. 22. ** Tob. vi. 16, 17.

of marriage, he wants not other means to exercise over them the power God permits him, whereof he discovers but too many effects by all the miseries with which he infests the married state. They who would not fall into them, ought to avoid the cause, and have nothing but a chaste love in their heart, so that they may truly say to God those excellent words of young Tobias, *Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust, do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever* *.

Thirdly, When you shall have formed a good intention, employ the proper means to deliberate well on so important an affair. The first, and most necessary, is to consult God by prayer, since a good marriage is the gift of God, and of the greatest graces to those who embrace that state. Moreover, there being nothing more difficult than to know well the disposition and humour of the person, the divine assistance is most particularly necessary, that you may not be deceived therein, and his assistance ought to be implored; to prayer must be added human and virtuous means to discover the disposition of the person, that you may not be rashly engaged, and know before you propose.

Fourthly, When you are about to proceed to this important undertaking, remember to avoid the considerable faults which we have pointed at above, and which are usually committed at the celebration of marriage. And first, because it is a sacrament, which ought to be received in a state of grace, you must dispose yourself for it by confession and communion. Though this duty be usually complied with, yet frequently in so negligent a manner, that there is no confession in one's whole life that is performed with less spiritual profit; for it is often without preparation, and with a mind full of distractions, which thinks of nothing less than of God, and salvation, but is intent upon the excess, vanity, and pomps of the world: not to speak of those who confess in haste, without examen, without contrition, without any serious thoughts of amending their life, whence they commit one sacrilege in confession, and another in receiving the sacrament of matrimony. Not to speak also of those, who being restored to the state of grace, relapse into sin before matrimony, by desire or immodest actions. There is no need to tell you such profanations may entail a secret curse upon such marriages: such persons not only lose all the graces which the sacrament confers on married persons, for fulfilling the obligations, and bearing the difficulties of their state, and for want of which graces they fall into a vast number of sins; but they draw down upon their own heads the vengeance of God, who sees himself offended by a sacrilege at the time when they stand most in need of his grace. Avoid this so grievous and dreadful a fault at the juncture. Take time to think seriously on your salvation, by retiring privately for some days, or for some hours in many days; and in that retirement pray to God, request his grace, implore his mercy, examine well your conscience

* Tob. viii. 9.

conscience to confess all your sins, propose to yourself to live piously for the future, and to acquit yourself of the obligations of the marriage state ; and to perform the better all these things, make choice of a discreet confessor, of whom you may receive all the advice necessary for you. Read such books as will instruct you in the holiness of matrimony, and in its obligations. I advise you to read the history of *Tobias* in the sacred scripture ; you will there find rules, and the model of a truly holy marriage, with the blessings which crowned it.

In fine, in the celebration of the nuptials be mindful to avoid excess in clothes and feasts, and all expences tending to vanity ; and instead of those expences, which are only intended to please men, give some considerable alms to the poor, which will draw down the blessing of God, as it is said of *Tobias* ; *When all had said amen, (to the nuptial benediction) they went to the feast : but the marriage feast they celebrated also with the fear of the Lord* *.

Be careful that all things be managed with virtue and modesty, so that God be in no wise offended. When you invite your relations and friends, remember to invite *Jesus Christ* thither ; that is, beseech him that he will be present by his grace, and give his blessing to it, as he did to the wedding of *Cana*. Forget not also to invite thither his holy mother ; it was she who beseeched her Son to have compassion on the parties, and by her prayer obtained that great miracle of the change of water into wine : she will perform the same with respect to you, if you pray to her as you ought. “ For, (as *St. Bernard* * says) if she had compassion on the temporal necessities of those who have invited her, there is no doubt “ but she will do the same for your spiritual necessities : she will obtain by her intercession what is ordinarily wanting in nuptials ; not “ a material wine, but the spiritual wine of the love of God, of a “ good intention, of a conjugal chastity, of a solid and persevering “ virtue, and all the necessary graces to discharge the duties of your “ state.”

A R T I C L E III.

The conclusion of the foregoing chapter.

WHEN you shall be once engaged in society, and in the state of matrimony, propose to yourself in such a manner, that your state be not a cause of your damnation, but a certain means of your salvation. It was with this view that you made choice of it, and God gave you that vocation only for this end. Labour therefore to second the intention of God, and to put in execution that which you yourself have undertaken. For this reason I have above pointed out the obligations of your state, and the dangers with which it abounds, that you may avoid the latter, and carefully fulfil the former.

These

* Tob. ix. 12. † De Nupt.

These obligations may be reduced to four, what married people owe to God, to their consort, to their children, and to themselves. They owe to God a holy life, and well regulated by the laws of the gospel; to their spouse, an inviolable fidelity; to their children, the care of educating them in the fear of God; and to themselves, the care of their salvation, by preferring it before all temporal blessings. Propose to yourself these four obligations, as the indispensable rules which you ought always to have before your eyes, to acquit yourself faithfully of them.

As for the dangers, use all your endeavours to avoid them: we have above reduced them to four, which are the most ordinary sources of all, both temporal and spiritual miseries, which happen to married persons.

You will prevent the first and third, by placing frequently before your eyes that expression of *Jesus Christ*: *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me* *. If you love God as you ought, you will love him above all things, that is, more than any thing that is most dear to you in the world. He who loves him not in this manner, will never be worthy to possess him in his eternal kingdom. Wife and children must be loved next to God, according to God, and for God.

The second danger which springs from the aversion, which sometimes arises between married persons, is a mischief which is more easily prevented than cured. To perform both the one and the other, there is no better means than frequently to represent to yourself that excellent admonition St. Paul gives to men: *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loveth the church, and delivered himself up for it: that he might sanctify it* †. If you consider well this example, you will find therein a perfect model of the true love married persons ought to bear to their wives, which ought to be a perfect love, which raises them above their imperfections, to support them with patience, and to cure them by the convenient means which prudence and charity shall suggest, if they have a real desire to save themselves with them.

In fine, you will avoid the fourth danger, which comes from the love of the world, by this great advice which the same Apostle gives to married persons, which they ought always to revolve in their mind: *This therefore I say, brethren; the time is short; it remaineth, that they also who have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as though they used it not; for the fashion of this world passeth away* ‡. The meaning is, that this life being short, we must make use of these goods with much more moderation, not fixing our affection upon them as being only subordinate to our principal aim: and that the goods of this life having more of appearance than solidity, it is a great folly to love them to the prejudice of those of the other life, which are real goods; and for these imaginary and perishable riches,

* Mat. x. 37.

† Eph. v. 25, 26.

‡ 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31.

riches, to put one's self in danger of losing blessings which shall never end, and by losing them, to draw upon one's self an eternity of misery.

C H A P. VIII.

Of a single life.

I SPEAK not here of the single life of priests and religious, but of the state of continence, which persons of both sexes sometimes observe in the world; which may happen two ways, by necessity or by election. By necessity, when for some cause which depends not on us, as poverty, infirmity, or some other invincible impediment, a man cannot attain to a good marriage. By election, when by deliberate purpose one renounces the state of matrimony, to live in perpetual continence.

A single life by necessity. They who happen to be obliged to a single life by the former way, have need of much virtue, to save themselves in a state wherein they remain against their will.

1. The first thing to be done, is strongly to resist the vexation their condition obliges them to. They ought to consider, that it is God who by his will has placed them in that state; that he has done it for good reasons; and chiefly for their salvation: from whence it follows, that he will not fail to bestow on them, all the graces necessary to observe continence, and live holily in their condition. Moreover they have this advantage above the other states, of being fully assured that their vocation comes from God, and by consequence nothing will be wanting on his part, to effect their salvation in the state wherein he has placed them.

2. Being convinced of these truths, they must perform a second thing; they must, as it is commonly said, make a virtue of necessity, by doing through a voluntary acceptance of their state, what they would have done by choosing it freely, if they had their wish; that is to say, they must embrace their condition as coming from the hand of God, and consecrate to him their chastity, as an obligation he requires of them, which may be as pleasing to him as if they had offered it of their own accord.

3. After they have thus voluntarily accepted the condition God has placed them in, they must propose to live holily therein, and use the necessary means for that end, which are the same we are about to give to them who make choice of it by their own free will.

A single life by choice. I mean those, who for the sake of practising more perfect virtue, by a divine call prefer a state of perpetual virginity; and I say they have need of many admonitions, which I beseech you, *Theotime*, to weigh well if you be of that number.

The

The first is, to examine well the motive which induces you to embrace this choice, and the life you mean to lead in that condition : for, if you only make choice of the state of celibacy to avoid the troubles and perplexity of the marriage state, and if you would live in that condition in a sinful manner conversing with women, and to be as fond of dissipation and worldly company as if you were married, it is certain your choice is wicked, and a snare that the devil lays for you, to make you fall into an infinite number of sins against chastity, from which it is impossible to preserve yourself amidst so voluptuous a life, and so many dangerous occasions. Wherefore in this case I make no difficulty of asserting that you would do better to marry, and are obliged to it. If you wish to make choice of the state of continence according to God, you must embrace it out of a motive of piety, that is, to please God more in that state, and the better to secure your salvation. This is the sole intention you ought to have in choosing so perfect a state, and they who have not such an intention, have embraced it on a bad account, and with danger of making a wretched end. Examine seriously what intention you have, beware of being deceived in it ; be solicitous to confer with some wise and pious person about it.

Secondly, when you shall be assured of your intention, you must come to the means of living up to that state, whereof the first is to know perfectly its excellency, its advantages, and its dangers.

As for its excellency, the fathers, from the very disciples of the Apostles, are all profuse in extolling the excellency of holy virginity, and unanimously declare it to be more perfect and more excellent than marriage ; although marriage is a holy state instituted by God, and in the order of providence and nature the general or most ordinary state of those who live in the world.

It surpasses that of marriage, “ As much as better things surpass less good ; as things above those which are below ; as much as celestial surpasses terrestrial, the more happy and holy excel those which have less sanctity and holiness *.”

The advantages of this state are great ; St. Paul † has comprised them in few words, when he says that it purifies the soul, fits it for a more perfect love of God, and a closer application to heavenly things, and disengages the mind and heart from worldly thoughts and affections.

The obligations of the same state are no less than its advantages. It requires two great virtues, the practice of which are very difficult, chastity and humility. Chastity does not only oblige them to abstain from the pleasures which matrimony may render lawful, but also to preserve an absolute, entire, and perfect purity of mind and body, and to fly from whatsoever may in the least wound modesty in thought, word, or deed. And humility obliges them to preserve themselves carefully from falling into vanity, or having any good opinion or presumption of themselves for the singular gift of voluntary

* S. Fulgentius de Virginitate. † 1 Cor. vii.

tary chastity. These two virtues ought to be inseparable, and they have so great a connection one with another, that St. *Fulgentius* calls them by the same name, saying, "Humility is the virginity of the mind; and it is so necessary for that of the body, that corporal chastity is of no advantage without that of the mind; it being certain, married persons shall be saved without observing corporal virginity, and virgins shall not without the spiritual, which is humility."

From these two great obligations it is easy to judge of the dangers of that state, which are as great as these two virtues are difficult to practise, and to unite together; the enemy of our salvation employs all his endeavours against virgins, to make them lose both the one and the other. St. *Fulgentius* says, "that the devil strongly assaults these two virtues in virgins of both sexes, and when he cannot deprive them of the first by temptations, he endeavours to steal the second by illusions. Sometimes he attacks not so strongly the chastity of the body, that he may more easily prevail over that of the mind, which is a more singular privilege; he lets himself be overcome in the temptations of the flesh, that by this victory he may instill pride into the mind of him who has overcome; not being able to conquer virgins by open vice, which he tempts them to, he gains them by sins which he draws from their own virtue."

It is necessary however, *Theotime*, to inform you, that these dangers ought not to prevent your embracing the state of continence, if you be inclined thereunto from an upright intention; for although the trials of virginity are great, the grace of God is still stronger to render you victorious over them; God by his goodness fails not to assist with his powerful grace, those who embrace so difficult a state, to serve him more perfectly, and who seek all the necessary means of discharging its respective duties, whereof the first is to know well the excellency, the obligations, and the dangers of that state.

The other means are prayer, and meditation upon holy things, industry, and all those others we have shewn above, in Part III. Chap. VIII. to preserve chastity; and also those we have given to preserve humility, in Part IV. Chap. XXIII.

C H A P. XI.

Most important advice for young persons, who begin to enter into the world.

Read these admonitions attentively.

THE sacred scripture in the second book of *Maccabees*, recounts, that after the taking of the city of *Jerusalem* by *Nabuchadonosor*, when

when the *Jews* were upon the point of being sent to *Babylon*, the Prophet *Jeremy* took care to furnish them with a great number of admonitions against the dangers they should be exposed to, of departing from God, and being perverted in that Pagan country. He gave them the law, that is, the scripture, that they should not forget the commandments of the Lord, and they should not err in their minds, seeing the idols of gold, and silver, and the ornaments of them. And with other such like speeches he exhorted them that they would not remove the law from their heart *.

The like advice is to be with no less earnestness pressed to youth, who are just stepping forth into the world, and upon the eve of settling in some state of life, in order that they may be fortified against the dangers with which it abounds at every step.

It is therefore as much as your soul is worth, to remember and put in practice the following advices.

A D V I C E I.

That the time of issuing out of youth, and entering into the world, is the most dangerous of all our life, and many are shipwrecked therein.

THIS is the first admonition I give you, and which I wish may be deeply engraven in the minds of all young people, to make them dread so slippery a step, and so dangerous a change for their age, where many are daily bringing mischief on their own heads.

It is there the devil waits for them, and where he hopes his attempts will not be vain and unsuccessful: he takes every offered occasion of withdrawing them from virtue, (if before they have been bred up therein) or engaging them more deeply in vice; such are the liberty they begin to enjoy, the idleness into which they easily fall at that time, the more opportunities they have of committing ill, together with easier means of indulging merriment and their pleasures, the new companies which they frequent, where they soon learn the spirit of the world, vanity, pride, love of pleasures, the imitation of the wicked, and the entire corruption of their morals; the sentiments of virtue which they had been blessed with in their youth, are easily forgotten; those seem now fit only for children; they think they must have a more refined and elevated spirit, they contemn what they esteemed before; the most pious resolutions appear to them the effects of simplicity: thus their former happy aversion to all that was sin, is changed into an unhappy approbation and love of open vice, to the disappointment of the best care, that had been taken in their education.

This truth is very manifest, experience makes it daily appear, to the great regret of those who pretend to the least zeal for the salvation of youth.

St.

* 2 Machab. ii. 2, 3.

St. *Augustine* deplores his unhappiness herein, when he says, "that domestic affairs having called him from his studies at the age of sixteen, to return to his father's house, vice and sensual pleasures began to grow above his head, as briars in a neglected ground, and to be multiplied so much more as there was no discreet hand to weed them out *."

It would be well if he had not had so many companions in his misfortune; but the multitude of them is very great, particularly amongst young people, who have any advantage above others in their condition or fortune.

There are few found to imitate the holy man *Tobias*, whom all young persons ought to take for their example in that age, of whom the scripture observes, that *when he was younger than any of the tribe of Nephthali, yet did he no childish thing in his work. Moreover when all went to the golden calves, which Jeroboam King of Israel had made, he alone fled the company of all, and went to Jerusalem to the temple of the Lord, and there adored the Lord God of Israel*†. What an excellent pattern is this for young people, who enter into the world, and which they ought frequently to place before their eyes, as being proposed by the Holy Ghost for that intent.

There are some, though few who imitate this example; God has always some faithful followers, who bend not their knees before *Baal*, nor permit themselves to be corrupted by the contagion of the world. To the end, *Theotime*, you may be of that number, I give you this so necessary, but little known admonition, and continue the following advices.

A D V I C E II.

That the chief care of young men, who enter the world, ought to be the preservation of the sentiments and practices of piety, which they have observed in their youth.

THE reason of this advice is, because the first source of the disorder of young persons at that time, springs from the change of their sentiments concerning piety, and the abandoning of their former religious exercises, such as daily prayer, reading pious books, frequenting the sacraments, conversation with virtuous persons, and especially advising with a discreet director.

Virtue is always the same, and what age or circumstances soever you be in, you always belong to God, and are bound to serve him faithfully.

Again, if you be obliged to virtue, you are also obliged to all the means necessary for acquiring and preserving virtue; such are the practices we have spoken of above. If you be truly in earnest in the business of your salvation, you will never fail in these essential duties. The moment you leave them off, your ruin is at hand. Be diligent in praying, in reading good books, in frequenting the sacraments,

* Lib. 2. Conf. c. 3. † Tob. i. 4, 5, 6.

ments, in conversing with virtuous persons, but particularly in disclosing your interior to such a spiritual adviser, as can best help you to amend. It is too common a misfortune among all young people not to consult knowing and zealous persons about the affairs of their souls, but to fly from those who might confirm them in good, or reclaim them if they be gone astray. They so long purposely decline these spiritual helps as at last to exclude themselves from all means of being reformed.

Act not in this manner, *Theotime*; remember that St. *Augustine* attributes to this cause the disorder he fell into at the end of his studies, because he had on one to take care to root out the vices which then grew up in his soul. Forget not also what the scripture recounts of King *Joas*; *Joas did that which was right before the Lord all the days that Joiada the priest taught him* *. He no sooner ceased to be governed, by the advice of that holy man, than he became wicked, and made an unhappy end.

A D V I C E III.

That young men must fly wicked company, especially where there is likely to be any freedom of conversation or friendship.

THE first snare the devil sets at that time for the salvation of young people, is wicked company: we have spoken above how hurtful it is, principally at that time, when it is dangerous beyond imagination. The world abounding with it, it is very difficult to escape being entangled. Besides, they have not as yet sufficient judgment to discern, nor sufficient discretion to avoid, nor courage to resist it. The wicked besiege them continually, to draw them to their disorders, as it is said in the *Proverbs* *. They tell them they must do as others do; an ill-timed civility leads them away, and a vicious shame hinders them from withstanding their wicked solicitations: thus they soon find themselves overcome and perverted.

See Part III.

Chap VI.

Dread this precipice, if you tender your salvation; you can never sufficiently apprehend the danger. Beseech God daily that he would deliver you; be not pleased in the ways of the wicked; turn away, fly and forsake them.

Among wicked company, above all avoid those with whom your situation or circumstances should otherwise engage you in some degree of familiarity. You will meet with them more frequently, you will have more trouble to resist them; we more easily permit ourselves to be won by those that render themselves agreeable. King *Joas*, who had lived so holily during his youth, under the direction of the high priest *Joiada*, was so far perverted by his

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courtiers,

* 4 Kings xii. 2. † Chap. i.

courtiers, as by their solicitations to fall into idolatry. Stand upon your guard, I say, that at least you may not be corrupted by them, although you cannot absolutely avoid meeting such company: fly their conversation as much as you can; when you cannot avoid them, stay not long with them, find some way of withdrawing from them. O *Theotime*, how happy would you be, if, after this so dangerous a time of youth, you could say with truth as King David, *The cords of the wicked have encompassed me, but I have not forgot thy law* *. *Thou hast protected me from the assembly of the malignant; from the multitude of the workers of iniquity* †.

A D V I C E IV.

That they must apply themselves quickly to some business, which may employ their time, and make them avoid idleness, which is then more dangerous than at any other time.

IDLENESS is the greatest cause of the dissoluteness of young men when they come from school. It is the mother of vice, and very hard to be avoided at that time. Nature of herself is inclined to it, especially in youth after labour which supposes some restraint, such as that of study, or other youthful employments. Hence when they begin to enjoy liberty, and become their own masters, they then the more easily abandon themselves to idleness, as they have a long time sighed after it, and know not the necessity of being employed at that time, nor the great evils idleness will expose them to. In this sloth vice and ill habits grow up in a short time, as it happened to St. *Augustine*. They think of nothing but play and pastimes, of indulging their pleasures, and of herding with those companions from whom they can neither fear reproach, nor expect advice.

To avoid this mischief, *Theotime*, I advise you to fly at that time this pernicious idleness. Apply yourself betimes to a regular employment, and chiefly to that which is necessary for you, to make you expert in the profession you embrace; both God and your own conscience oblige you to it. Add thereto the studies best calculated to improve your mind, as of history, as well sacred as profane, chronology, geography, languages, good authors, and other like studies, which are commendable, profitable, and pleasing. If you are desirous of being well employed, you will find more than enough to fill up your time; and besides the profit of your labour, you will enjoy therein great contentment and satisfaction of mind, far beyond all this world can afford. Read Part III. Chap VII.

* Psalm cxviii. 61.

† Psalm lxiii. 3.

A D V I C E V.

That young people must avoid three ordinary causes of their ruin at that time, Play, Wine, and Impurity.

THESE are the three great rocks on which at this time young people split, and to which idleness and company bring them, and cause their shipwreck. Some are lost by an inordinate love for gaming, which occasions an excessive loss of time, together with that of their fortune, vexation and despair, and makes them frequently fall into some notorious extravagance. Others by the excess of wine and good cheer, which they then seek as their chief happiness; which, besides the ruin of their health and fortune, is frequently the cause of sad mischiefs. Others, and the greatest part, by the detestable sin of impurity, which so universally possesses young people, principally at that time; and many by all these together.

I beseech you, dear *Theotime*, to observe attentively these three precipices you are to avoid at that time. See what we have said above of each of these, in Part III. Chap VIII. and in Part IV. Chap. XX. Use all possible endeavours to fly them, and be confident, that upon this flight depends your present happiness, and eternal salvation.

A D V I C E VI.

That they must avoid at that time irresolution concerning the state they ought to choose, and after the choice, not change easily, nor without great reason.

THIS is also an advice of much importance for young persons, when they are at the time of choosing a condition of life, not to be too long unresolved. This irresolution hinders them from applying themselves to any settled employment; it makes them lose much time, which might be usefully employed; it exposes them to many temptations, oftentimes to sadness and discontent; and when it continues long, it renders them unfit for any thing that is good all the rest of their life, as we daily see.

A young man must then resolve in good time on the state he will embrace, observing nevertheless in this resolution the conditions we have spoken of above.

But when his determination is once prudently fixed, he ought to avoid inconstancy and change, which is yet greater mischief than the first irresolution.

The evils which this inconstancy causes in a young man cannot be sufficiently expressed: the devil makes use of it to cast him into melancholy, vexation, and disquiet; from thence into a long idleness,

ness, to make him lose unprofitably the best part of his life, and hinder him from making himself capable of any good employment. He there takes occasion of moving him to impatience, to a distaste of virtue, to a relaxation in his religious exercises, of drawing him into great temptations, and often plunging him into vice.

This made the wise man say, that *As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that leaveth his place* *. For as that bird finds neither repose nor security, flying up and down without meeting with any resting place, exposing her life to many dangers, so an unconstant man finds no quiet, but exposes his soul to many difficulties.

Avoid then, *Theotime*, this inconstancy ; and if you be disturbed with it, be assured that you are exposed to a very dangerous evil, and a great temptation. This mischief is frequently the punishment of the sins of youth ; wherefore humble yourself before God, and beg of him that he would deliver you from it by his grace, and bestow on you a constancy of mind to continue in his will, and faithfully perform it.

Make a Christian choice of your state of life ; then change not without great consideration. But if there occurs some solid reason for changing your resolution, trust not to your own judgment, but to that of discreet persons ; and in waiting their advice, remain still in your former resolution, and continue the exercises you performed to prepare yourself for it, until by discreet counsel you find an absolute reason for changing.

A D V I C E VII.

That young men ought to foresee the dangers and obligations of their calling, and firmly purpose to avoid those dangers, and faithfully to satisfy their respective obligations.

I HAVE spoken above of the dangers and obligations of diverse states, that I might give you this precaution, and make you take this resolution.

Now I speak not of a slight fore-knowledge, nor of a passing resolution, but of a serious and well meditated foresight, and of a long and repeated resolution.

But to render it efficacious, I desire two things of you. The first is, to beseech God frequently that he would assist you with his holy grace, to avoid the dangers you meet with in the world, and to discharge the duty of a true Christian in your profession, and also the particular obligations incumbent upon you. The second is, to set apart one day every month for reading and considering what we have said of the dangers and obligations of the state you have chosen, in order to reflect seriously, and renew your resolution of avoiding the dangers of your profession, and complying with its obligations.

Prov. xxvii. 8.

ADVICE

A D V I C E VIII.

That they must accustom themselves betimes not to be ashamed of virtue.

WHEN you shall be fortified against all the former obstacles, there will remain yet one for you to encounter which is that vicious shame young persons frequently have for virtue. The world is so corrupt, that virtue is become the object of shame and confusion. Wherefore I advise you to accustom yourself betimes to overcome that foolish shame, one of the greatest obstacles to salvation. It is most criminal in the sight of God, to blush at his service; and he will not acknowledge those for his servants, who have blushed to fulfil his commandments.

You must resolutely master this shame, there is only a little trouble in the beginning; you must declare yourself early in favour of virtue against vice, and readily perform the actions of a virtuous man, without either doing it to please men, or neglecting it for fear of them. We must perform our duty without concerning ourselves with what the world may say or think of it, but only regarding God and the obligations of a Christian. See what we have said of this subject, in Part III. Chap. V.

A D V I C E IX.

That they must be careful to embrace a solid and real virtue, and not an apparent and deceitful piety.

THOUGH you be resolved to live virtuously, you may be deceived in the choice of piety, leaving solid and real virtue, to embrace a false and imaginary devotion, which oftentimes is more dangerous than bare-faced vice, though nevertheless very common amongst men of all states, even amongst Ecclesiastics and Religious. Now there are many sorts of counterfeit piety.

Four sorts of false piety.

First.

The first sort is of those who rest contented with the exterior shew of piety and virtue, performing carefully certain outward actions of devotion, as some set forms of prayer, certain abstinences and fasts not commanded, or other exterior mortification, some practices of confraternities, and other like devotions, but in the mean time neglect interior and solid virtue, that is, the flight of sin, the correction of their vices, mortification of their passions; continuing always in the same vices, proud, cholerick, impatient, revengeful, much addicted to earthly goods, to the pleasures of this life, to excess, to vanity, and often to unchaste delights, and to many other vices.

The

Second. The second is of those who are exact in performing works of counsel, but omit those of command. Such is the piety of the master of a family, who accustoms himself to frequent the sacraments, to be assiduous in prayer, to visit hospitals, and in the mean time neglects to take care of his family, to instruct his children, to withdraw them from vice when they are engaged therein, to be concerned for the salvation of all under his roof, to watch over their conduct, to repress any growing disorders, to pay his debts, restore ill-gotten goods.

Third. The third is of those who among things commanded observe some, and neglect others; practise those which they find easiest, or conformable to their inclination, but omit those which seem to them more difficult. For example, there are some who would not wrong their neighbour in his goods, yet make no scruple of taking away his honour by detraction. Others have an aversion for drunkenness, but not for impurity. Others hate lewd actions, but are not guarded in their discourse, or thoughts on such sinful matters. Others love to assist their neighbour, but never will pardon an offence. All this piety is false, because he who is defective in one commandment is void of charity.

Fourth. The fourth is of those who observe the things of obligation which are common to all Christians, and perform not those belonging to their particular state. Thus for a superior, a pastor, a magistrate, to live as a Christian in general, but in the mean time to neglect the care of his charge, and the particular obligations of his calling, is to deceive himself with the shadow of virtue. The duties of a private man, are different from those of a public person; and in each condition there are particular obligations, wherein one cannot fail without being wanting to virtue.

I should be too long, if I should treat of all sorts of false piety; that you may briefly comprehend them, *Theotime*, I advise you not to embrace a proud and arrogant virtue, which despises others, which can suffer nothing, which takes notice of the faults of others, but acknowledges not its own.

Nor a fullen and melancholy virtue, which makes itself troublesome and difficult to all, severe to others, easy to itself, ready to blame, but never to excuse, even when there is great reason.

Nor a singular virtue, which sequesters itself from the ways of others, to follow extraordinary practices, new devotions, affected singularities, which are often the effects of a secret and rooted presumption.

Nor a mean, silly, and childish virtue, which trembles where it ought not to fear, stands in dread where it ought not to doubt, which makes a scruple of things which are not sins, but none of those which are.

Nor, on the contrary, a rash, and too bold a virtue, which, under pretext of not committing great crimes, indulges many sinful liberties, which is a great error, because he who contemns small faults, shall fall into great ones.

Nor an imprudent and indiscreet virtue, which passes over many faults which offend their neighbour more than it edifies by the good it does.

Nor a human and political virtue, which does good for worldly considerations, to please men, to be esteemed, to obtain some end; briefly, which regards itself in all things it performs.

Nor an interested virtue, which addict itself to good, by reason of the benefit and temporal advantage it receives.

Nor a remiss virtue, or of short continuance, which is dejected by the least obstacle, and shaken by present difficulties.

Carefully avoid all these kinds of virtues, *Theotime*, or rather all these faults which destroy true virtue; labour to shun them, and acquire the contrary qualities. Let your virtue be humble in itself, sweet and charitable towards others, not singular; but that which loves the order of the church, and conduct of its pastors; rational, that is, neither too fearful nor too rash; discreet in its actions; disinterested in its pretensions, which seeks only to please God, and to perform good actions only for his sake; courageous in the midst of obstacles, and persevering when surrounded with difficulties.

A D V I C E X.

That young persons ought to confirm themselves more and more in solid sentiments of faith and religion.

THIS is also a very necessary admonition, because faith is the solid ground-work of piety, and without her there is no salvation *. Now you will find in the world many machines leveled against this fundamental rock, which you may guard against. These are impiety, heresy, and licentiousness. Impiety of the wicked, heresy of reformers in matters of religion, and the licentiousness of some wicked Catholics.

Impiety is a monster which attacks God himself, which lifts up its head against heaven †, and its hand against the omnipotent, revolting against its Creator, to serve unworthily the creature, and endeavouring to deface in its heart the most holy and inviolable sentiments which faith, reason, and nature herself had imprinted there, to abandon itself to its passions with more liberty, and less remorse of conscience.

Heresy, to follow our own judgment in matters of faith, shakes of the yoke of the Catholic church, which is *the pillar and ground of the truth* ‡. *And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* §. According

* Heb. xi. 6. † Job. xv. ‡ 1 Tim. iii. 15. § Mat. xvi. 18.

According to the promise of Son of God, who commands us to hearken to her, under pain of being esteemed unbelievers*. So that he who does not acknowledge this holy mother, shall not have God for his father, according to St. Cyprian, and St. Augustine.

The licentiousness of wicked Catholics, making them seek means to flatter themselves in their vices, emboldens them to take the liberty to examine divine truths, and to subject them to human reason; thence to fall into doubt, and from doubt into impious opinions, secret and hidden errors, which lead them to perdition.

These are the three monsters, *Theotime*, the assault of which at your entering into the world you ought to stand in dread of: fly them, and have a horror and abomination of them, as the offspring of hell, and the plague of man-kind: avoid all those in whom you shall find them. *In the last days*, says the great Apostle, *men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, wicked, and lovers of pleasures more than of God. Now these avoid* †.

Hold it for an infallible maxim, that there is nothing more certain than the Christian Catholic faith. This faith so sublime in her mysteries, so pure and holy in her maxims, supported by so great authorities, foretold by the prophets, confirmed by so many miracles, cemented by the blood of martyrs, defended by so many learned and faintly persons, embraced by such a multitude of people, continued during so many ages, which has never been shaken, either by the persecution of Pagans, or by the false doctrine of heretics, or by the wicked lives of many Catholics.

After all these things, says St. *Austin* ‡, “shall we doubt to enclose ourselves in the bosom of this holy church, which according to the confession of the whole world, since the Apostles to this present time, by a perpetual succession of bishops and pastors, has always stood on foot, in the midst of a vast number of heretics, who have in vain assaulted her, and who have always been condemned, either by the judgment of the people themselves, or by the authority of councils, or by the force of miracles? Not to acknowledge the primacy of this church, is an effect of the highest impiety, or of a rash presumption.”

Ponder well these truths, which are powerful enough to subdue the most rebellious spirits. Give thanks to God, that he has placed you in the bosom of his holy church, continue firm and constant therein, adhere always to the pious doctrine of this infallible guide, be subject to her pastors, and to her visible head the supreme bishop the vicar of *Jesus Christ* upon earth. This is the body of the tree, from which we must never separate to stick to the boughs. But to preserve your faith, remember to lead a good life; because the corruption of faith is an effect of sin. *This charge I commend to thee*, says St. Paul to Timothy, *that you war a good warfare, having faith* and

* Chap. xviii. 17.

‡ Tim. iii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

‡ L. de util. cred.

and a good conscience, which some rejecting have made shipwreck concerning the faith*.

A D V I C E XI.

That they must be strongly settled in the Christian maxims, opposite to those of the world.

IT is not sufficient to be established in the solid sentiments of faith, you must also be settled in the maxims of morality, and of a Christian life. The greatest danger you will find in the world, is that of corrupting your mind by its false maxims, quite contrary to those of salvation, by which the judgment being blinded, it is impossible that our life should not become disorderly. *When you are come into Babylon* (said the Prophet *Jeremy*, writing to the *Jews* in captivity) *you shall see Gods of gold and silver, and of stone, and of wood, borne upon shoulders, causing fear to the Gentiles. Beware therefore that you imitate not the doings of others. But when you see the multitude behind, and before, adoring them, say you in your hearts, thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord**. I say the same to you, *Theotime*, you will see men in the world adoring idols, that is, pleasures, vanities, riches, the flesh, and their passions; you will there see vice honoured, and virtue contemned; you will there hear maxims suitable to the corruption which the devil has introduced. Be careful that you permit not yourself to be depraved by the example of the multitude. To prevent so great an evil, meditate frequently upon the true maxims of Christianity, those eternal truths which the world will not know, yet which will never alter. Imprint them deeply in your mind, to have recourse to them there, against the example and false maxims of the world, that they may serve you as secure rules for the conduct of your life: I shall give you here the most important, which I beseech you to read often.

C H A P. X.

Christian Maxims.

M A X I M I.

That we are not created for this present life, but for heaven.

THIS is the fundamental truth of Christianity; that there is a God, and that he has prepared an eternal reward for them who serve him; that this life is but a passage and way by which we must walk towards life everlasting. *Here we have no lasting city,* says the Apostle: *but we seek one to come†.*

* 1 Tim. i. 18, 19. † Bar. vi. 2, 3, 4, 5. ‡ Heb. xiii. 14.

M A X I M II.

That the most important affair which we have in this life, is our salvation.

ONE thing is necessary, says our Saviour himself*. *What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul † ?*

M A X I M III.

That salvation is not obtained without some pains.

THIS is what men cannot be convinced of, and yet it is most certain. The Son of God cries out aloud to all Christians, *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence ‡. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me §. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way, that leadeth to life : and few there are that find it || ! Strive to enter by the narrow gate : for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able ¶.*

M A X I M IV.

That our chief care in this life must be to please God, and live in his grace.

TO please God his Creator, his Lord, and his sovereign good, is the sole and real happiness of man in this life : a happiness, without which the greatest blessings are extreme miseries, and which the great Apostle wishes particularly to his dear disciples, and to all Christians. *We cease not, says he, to pray for you, and to beg that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom, and spiritual understanding : that you may walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing : being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God**.* Were Christians convinced of this truth, they would fly sin like death itself, and seek all means of pleasing God, and living in his holy grace.

M A X I M V.

That we cannot be in the grace of God without having a constant resolution of never offending him grievously on any account whatsoever.

IN this resolution consists the practice of the great commandment of loving God above all things, without which it is impossible to please him, and be in his grace ; for he who loves him not, remaineth in death. Now we cannot love God without this resolution of never offending him. *If any one love me, says the Son of God, he will keep my word ; he that loveth me not, keepeth not my words ††.*

MAXIM

* Luke x. 42. † Mat. xvi. 26. ‡ Matt. xi. 12. § Matt. xvi. 24. || Mat. vii. 14. ¶ Luke xi. i. 27. ** Col. i. 9, 10. †† John. xiv. 23, 24.

M A X I M VI.

That sin is the greatest evil that can befall a man.

SIN offers an infinite injury to God, which all men and Angels cannot possibly repair : it deprives man of the grace of God, and makes him incur his hatred and indignation ; it causes him to lose heaven for ever, and reduces him to the state of eternal damnation : it renders him unworthy of all the graces necessary to raise him from that deplorable condition, wherein God may justly leave him as he does many. Is there any mischief in the world to be compared to this ? Is it possible men should think so little of it, and not dread so great an evil ?

M A X I M VII.

That the worst of all misfortunes is to die in mortal sin.

IT is the misery of miseries, because it is the beginning of eternal misery, the loss of all happiness, the source of all evils, without remedy, without recovery ; in a word, it is eternal damnation. To comprehend this misfortune, consider if you can think, what it is to lose God, and that for ever ; to be banished from heaven, and that for ever ; to be condemned to the flames of hell, with the devils, and that for ever, without end, without cessation, without comfort, without hope ; always in rage, always in despair, for having fallen into this dreadful calamity, after having been able to avoid it, after having despised God's grace, and lost such means of salvation. O *Theotime*, is it possible to think on this misfortune, and not stand in dread of it ?

M A X I M VIII.

That this misfortune happens to many, and to those who think the least of it.

IT happens to all those who have not time to do penance before their death, or having time, were not penitent at all, or as they ought, dying without the dispositions necessary for salvation. For this reason the Son of God has so often warned us to *take heed; watch, for ye know not when the time is ** ; you know not the day nor the hour †. Be then ready : for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come ‡. What I say to you, I say to all : watch §.

M A X I M IX.

That we must meditate often on death, judgment, and eternity.

THIS is the chief means to avoid that so common a misfortune. He who shall reflect well on the last judgment, will be afraid to fall

* Mar. xiii. 33. † Mat. xxv. 13. ‡ Luke xii. 40. § Mar. xiii. 37.

fall into sin, or to continue in it ever so short. This is the advice of the wise man, which all men ought to have continually in their memory ; *In all works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin**. This young persons seldom consider. Think well on it, *Theotime*, that by reflecting on God's judgments, you may avoid offending him.

M A X I M X.

That we must serve God for himself, and through love.

ALTHOUGH the considerations of death, judgment and eternity, be effectual and necessary to move us to virtue, nevertheless we must not stop there ; it appertains only to servile souls to be guided by fear alone, virtuous souls serve God through love, and because to him alone it is due to be beloved, honoured, and served. Fear is good, but it must not be alone, love must perfect what fear has begun. O *Theotime*, how is it possible for a soul to serve a God so amiable in himself, and from whom she has received all she possesses, and expects all she hopes for, otherwise than from a motive of love ?

M A X I M XI.

That we must have a rule for our conduct, and that this rule ought to be the law of God, the example and doctrine of Jesus Christ, and not the world, nor the example of others, nor custom.

IT is a common maxim among men, to do as others do ; and to bring for a reason of their actions, that the world does so ; that it is the custom ; that such and such act so. This is a wicked, false, and pernicious maxim. Men are not our rule, but God. The world is all full of error : men, whoever they be, are subject to failings. God is truth itself, he has given us his law to conduct us, he has commanded us to hearken to him : *Hear ye him* † ; that is the rule we ought to follow. “ Let not those (says St. *Jerome* ‡) who make profession of being the disciples of truth, follow the erring multitude. It is most safe to follow him who saith, he is the way, the truth, and the life.” Never govern yourself by the world, by custom, or by the example of others : and in all your actions look not upon the practice nor judgment of men, but upon the law of God, and the doctrine of *Jesus Christ* and his church, which he has commanded us to hear and follow, and act nothing but what shall be conformable to that infallible rule.

* Eccli. vii. 40. † Matt. xvii. 5. ‡ Ep. ad Celant.

M A X I M XII.

That the world is deceived in all its judgments and maxims.

IT is easy to manifest this maxim by induction. The world places its sovereign happiness in riches, it desires them with earnestness, and seeks after them before all things. Truth assures us, that riches make not a man happy, they are frequently great impediments to salvation; *Happy is that people whose God is the Lord* *.

The world makes account, that there is no contentment but that which is found in the satisfaction of the senses, and in the pleasures of this life. And the truth is, that there is no solid pleasure but in virtue.

The world places honour in many things which are not honourable, as in esteem, reputation, dignities, places of honour, respect of men. But the truth is, that real honour consists in virtue, and is inseparable from it.

The world makes courage consist in taking revenge, and in not pardoning injuries. And the truth is, courage consists in pardoning, or else the Son of God had no courage, when he prayed on the cross for his persecutors, and was deceived when he commanded us to love our enemies. "Either the Son of God (says St. Bernard †) "is deceived, or else the world errs." But the Son of God is truth itself, which cannot be deceived: The world then is mistaken and errs in all its maxims: it is not the world therefore we are to follow, but *Jesus Christ*.

M A X I M XIII.

That to be united to God, we must condemn earthly things.

YES, *Theotime*, for all that is in the world is vanity; there is nothing solid but God, and in God. *Vanity of vanities*, says the wise man, *and all is vanity* †. All that is here is nothing, all passes like a shadow and smoke. For this reason the Apostle said, *I count all things but as dung, that I may gain Christ* §. And the well beloved Disciple cries to all the faithful: *Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him: for all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life. The world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof* *. "Make choice" (adds St. Augustine) either to set your affection on temporal things, "and pass with time; or to love eternal goods, and live for ever "with God ¶."

* Ps. cxliii. 15. † Serm. 3. de Nativ. ‡ Eccles. i. 2. § Phil. iii. 8. || 1 Joh. ii. 15, 16, 17. ¶ Tract. 2 in 1 S. Joan.

C H A P. XI.

Of perseverance.

THIS, dear *Theotime*, is the last advice I have to give to compleat your instruction, it is the greatest and most necessary of all. It is to no purpose to have entered the path of virtue, nor to have made some progress therein, except we persevere to the end: It is perseverance which crowns a good life, and deserves the recompense, that finishes the great work of salvation, and introduces us into eternal happiness.

It is a great happiness to have been faithful to the divine grace in youth, and also to have preserved virtue at our entering into a state of life; but it is a sad misfortune, when forgetting the great obligations we have of serving God, and abusing the favours we have received from his mercy, we unhappily abandon it to follow sin. *Wo be to them*, says the wise man, *that have lost patience, and that have forsaken the right ways, and have gone aside into crooked ways. What will they do, when the Lord shall begin to examine **? *Theotime*, what will they answer at that dreadful day of the divine judgment, when God shall make them see the greatness and multitude of his favours, and shall reproach their sinful ingratitude, their infidelity, their inconstancy in his service, the blindness with which they abandoned him, who is the fountain of all blessings, and the sole author of salvation? *It had been better for them*, says the Apostle St. Peter, *not to have known the way of Justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment, which was delivered to them †*.

There is no question but a good beginning in youth is highly necessary for a happy end, and a powerful means to attain it, but it; is not always pursued. It happens too often to men as to trees, which bear fair blossoms in the spring, and no fruit in autumn. The sacred scripture furnishes us with many examples of those who have finished their life in virtue, having embraced it in their youth; but it also produces some who have not persevered, to teach men with what great care they ought to continue constant in the way of justice.

We have a convincing proof of this truth in the example I have often cited, of king *Joas*, who having lived in virtue from his tender youth to the age of forty years and more, sullied the latter part of his reign by a disgraceful end.

But how much more dreadful is the fall of *Solomon*? That prince had been favoured in his youth with extraordinary blessings. He had been bred up in virtue by the incredible care of his parents, as he himself testifies. He was in youth the most pure, most holy,

* Eccli. ii. 15, 16. † 2 Pet. ii. 21.

holy, and the most accomplished of any that ever lived. God had done him the favour to speak to him personally, and gave him permission to petition whatever he pleased. He prudently asked neither riches nor pleasures, nor glory, nor any of the things which young people are accustomed so greedily to seek after, but only virtue and wisdom.

God was pleased with his choice, and endowed him with wisdom superlatively greater than had yet been, or should be granted to any man besides. With this great wisdom he spends the better part of his life in eminent virtue, acceptable to God, honoured, and almost adored by men, who came from all parts of the world to hear his wisdom; governing his people with equity and justice, instructing them in the service of God by his wise discourses, and by the sacred books he had composed, full of divine wisdom, dictated by the Holy Ghost himself*. After all this, *Theotime*, (who could believe it, if the scripture had not said it?) after all these favours, and all these wonders, this incomparable man fell so unfortunately, as to be plunged into the depth of vice and idolatry. This great light was eclipsed, this wonderful wisdom permitted itself to be surprised, and letting his heart be overcome by love of women, lost in a short time all his wisdom, and became infatuated even to such a degree, as to commit idolatry with his idolatrous women, and to adore as many idols as he had women of different religions†.

O human misery, how great art thou! O weakness and inconsistency of man! Who is there that ought not to tremble after this terrible example? If the highest virtues are shaken, what ought not common virtues to fear? Woe, and woe again to those who have lost perseverance, and who have departed from the path of virtue, to go astray in the broad road of vice!

Dear *Theotime*, let us learn by this example to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*‡; not to trust to our own past merits, but to be always upon our guard. *Let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall*§. Christ did not say, he who shall have begun, but *he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved*||.

To avoid this misfortune, see here the means you must practise.

Means to acquire

1. Be faithful to divine grace; for as the holy *perseverance*. council of *Trent* says, "Except we be wanting to the grace of God, he will perfect in us the good work he has begun, working in us the will and accomplishment ¶."

2. Live always in humility, in fear, in a distrust of yourself, in the exercise of good works: for, according to the doctrine of the same council, "Although every one should firmly trust to the divine assistance, those nevertheless who think they stand, ought
"to

* Eccles. xii. 9. † 3 Kings ix. ‡ Phil. ii. 12. § 1 Cor. x. 12. || Mat. xxiv. 13. ¶ Sess. 6. c. 13.

“ to fear least they fall, and work their salvation with fear and
 “ trembling, by labour, by watching, by alms, by prayers, by
 “ offerings, by fasts, by charity. Because not being as yet regene-
 “ rated to glory, but only to the hopes of enjoying it, they
 “ ought to stand in fear of the battle with the world, the flesh,
 “ and the devil, in which they must yet engage, and in which they
 “ cannot conquer, unless by the grace of God they obey the Apostle,
 “ who admonishes us not to live according to the flesh ; for if we
 “ live according to it, we shall die, but if by the spirit we shall
 “ mortify in us the deeds of the flesh, we shall live.”

3. The third means is diligently to perform these five things.
 1. To fly the dangerous occasions of offending God ; for he who
 preserves not himself from danger shall fall therein. 2. Not to
 fall into a remissness, or to rise as soon as we are fallen, because
 that easily leads to sin. 3. To avoid the sins of omission, and
 among others, those which are against the obligations of one's
 state ; pious persons are frequently deceived in this point. 4. To
 preserve yourself from a secret presumption, which insensibly ming-
 ling itself with virtue, is a strong tendency to vice, and the ruin
 of virtue. 5. To avoid a multitude of venial sins, which being
 neglected lead to mortal. *He that contemneth small things, says the
 wise man, shall fall by little and little **.

4. The fourth means is, to examine often the condition of your
 soul, her habits, her inclinations, her affections ; to discover those
 which are ill, and correct them. For this reason you must frequently
 reflect upon yourself, and from time to time, or at least once a
 year, review and renew your interior state, that you may gain
 the strength of a new life in the service of God. To read of-
 ten the advices given above in Chap. IX. and the Christian maxims
 in Chap. X.

In fine, the great, necessary, and most effectual means, is to
 pray much, and beg of God frequently this holy perseverance.
 Hence it is that the Son of God says, that *we must watch and pray* † ;
 that *we must pray always* ‡ *without ceasing*, says St. Paul §. St.
 Augustine says, that it is only granted to those that pray for it.
 And the second council of Orange teaches us, that even “ the
 “ faithful and saints ought always to implore the divine assistance,
 “ that they may arrive at a good end, or persevere in good
 “ works ¶.”

O *Theotime*, how happy would you be, if having begun to serve
 God in your tender years, you take care to say with David all
 your life, *Thou hast taught me, O God, from my youth : and till now
 I will declare thy wonderful works. And unto old age and gray hairs,
 O God, forsake me not* ||.

* Eccli. xix. 1. † Mar. xiii. 33.
 ¶ Chap. 10. || Psalm lxx. 17, 18.

‡ Luke xviii. 1.

§ 1 Thes. v. 17

In conclusion, dear reader, remember, that life passes, death draws near, eternity approaches ; life is but a moment, and on this moment depends eternity. O moment ! O eternity ! let us at least employ this moment to serve our Creator, to whom an eternity of service is due. Let us consecrate ourselves entirely during this mortal life, to that adorable goodness, who gives himself fully to us for all eternity. Let nothing be able to separate us from his service. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ*, says the divine Apostle *. O God, permit it not, but cause, by thy divine bounty, that our hearts be inseparably united to thee ; and that, performing thy will in all things, we may love thee with perseverance in this life, to love, adore, and bless thee for ever in heaven, where thou livest and reignest world without end. *Amen.*

* Rom. viii. 35.

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

31 JAN 50

